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Editor's DESK

by John M. Buchanan

A reader-supported journal

FEW MAGAZINES have the digital revolution figured out. That revolution is still very much under way. Like most journals, the CHRISTIAN CENTURY combines print technology that was developed a long time ago with digital technology that continues to evolve in the 21st century. Some of you wait for the CENTURY to arrive in the mailbox. Others find it via our website, e-mail alerts, or social media.

The CHRISTIAN CENTURY has invested precious resources to remain a viable and indispensable journal for people of faith who strive to “think critically and live faithfully.” We are proud of our website which posts religion news as events happen and offers fresh commentary daily, as well as easy access to a complete online edition of the print magazine and to our robust archives.

We have thought a lot about a question that all journals, from the *New Yorker* to the *New York Times*, must ponder: How much of the magazine should appear online, without cost to the reader? Currently, readers can freely access any three articles per month from the print edition. Our hope, of course, is that this taste of the magazine will be an inducement to read more and to subscribe, either in print or online.

The CHRISTIAN CENTURY is unusual among print publications in that subscriptions account for 60 percent of our revenue (with advertising bringing in 19 percent of the total). Other publications depend on a much higher percentage of ad revenues. Many publications also rely on institutional financial

backing or wealthy benefactors. We rely on you, our readers, to keep this enterprise viable by your contributions over and above the cost of a subscription.

The digital revolution will surely continue. We know that there are many challenges and adjustments ahead.

But as long as Christian leaders seek to think critically and live faithfully, there will be an urgent need for a forum like the CHRISTIAN CENTURY. More than any other journal I know, the CENTURY reflects a faith that is intellectually serious, spiritually alive, and socially engaged. It embodies the conviction that faith is a matter of head as well as heart and hands.

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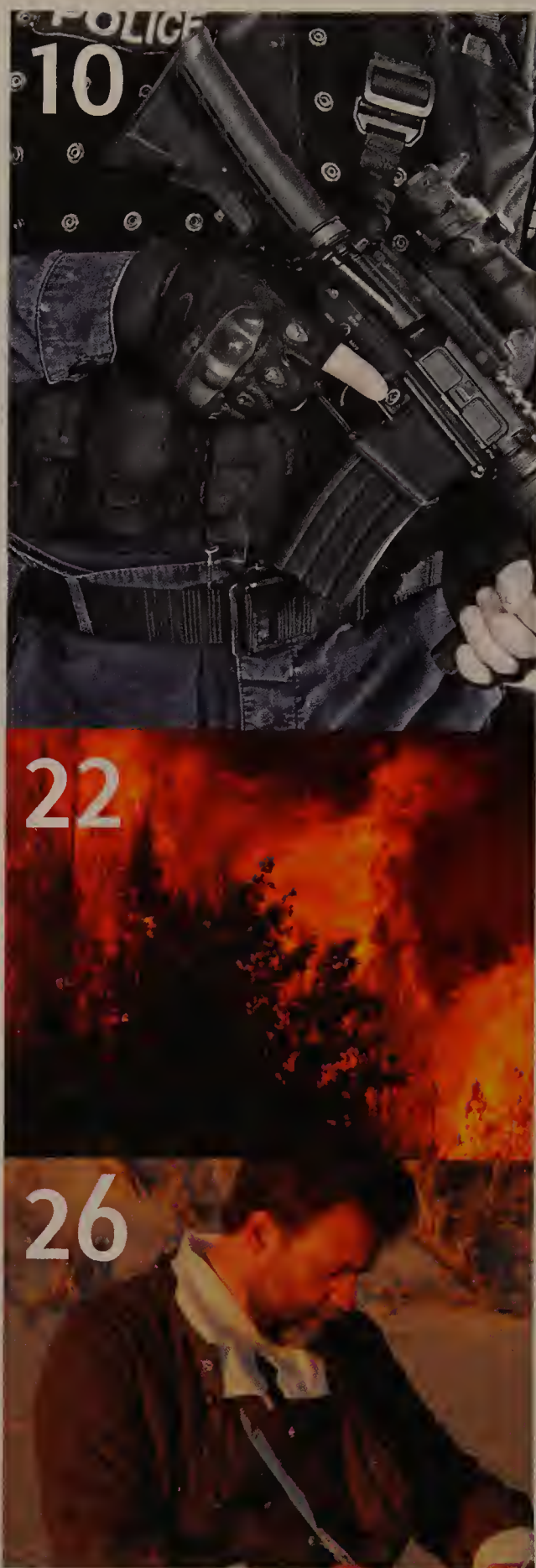
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Church loyalties

Stephen Long seems to think that Protestants are Protestants because they protest against something (“My church loyalties,” Aug. 6). That may have been true during the time of the Reformation. In my experience, however, thoughtful, committed Protestants are affiliated with a denomination because it affirms an aspect of the Christian faith that they consider important and they wish to affirm it as well. Long’s list of reasons why he remains a Methodist is an excellent example of exactly such an affirmation. It seems to me that he should remain a Methodist and continue to affirm all that he has learned from Methodism, while honoring the good things that he sees in the Roman Catholic Church.

I see no reason why “every good Protestant Christian must be willing to return to Rome.” From the earliest days of the church, people who call themselves followers of Christ have differed in their beliefs about who Jesus is and what exactly it means to follow him. Church unity does not equal uniformity. Each branch of the Christian church has its own theological, liturgical, and devotional distinctions. Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, all of them are necessary in order for the whole picture of Christian truth to be seen. Church unity, to me, consists of each branch recognizing the distinctions of the others—honoring the truth in them when, in good conscience, they can, respectfully disagreeing with them when they must.

Diane C. Ruark

North Attleboro, Mass.

Iwould agree that Long is not yet ready to jump ship. I grew up in the Catholic Church, became a Maryknoll sister, left the order to marry, and eventually left the Catholic Church for the United Church of Christ. I have never regretted my decision and from the outside see the deep flaws that permeate the church I once loved.

Long’s admiration for Pope John Paul II is obviously shared by many in and out of the church. John Paul, however, did not support the work being done by missionaries and indigenous clergy and religious in Latin America. He feared communism and never understood the terrible burden of the poor. He refused to listen to the testimony of Archbishop Romero on the war that was being waged on the poor. In Long’s delight in the election of Pope Benedict, he must have missed the declaration that with the exception of the Anglican Communion, Protestant denominations were no long “separated brethren” but “ecclesial communities.”

Maybe Long should wait, surrounded by his loving ecclesial community until Pope Francis opens a few more doors. I wish him God’s blessing and encourage him to stay where he is.

Adrianne Carr

Burlington, Vt.

As an oblate of Saint John’s Abbey and a veteran of many ecumenical conversations, I read Long’s thoughtful essay as writing my own history on this matter. Of course, the United Methodist Church (and our sister denominational bodies) also know the “messy” character of our own inner theaters! But in this world of such enmity and warfare of all kinds, the sense of needing to belong together on essentials is pressing indeed. We need to name and respect differences, but more, we need to receive the unity that God has promised and embodied. Like Long, I will continue to ask the question and be on the lookout for signs of some new reciprocity that can’t be denied.

Don Saliers

christiancentury.org comment

Irecall from my Latin studies that *protestant* comes from *protestari*, which means *to bear witness*. To be a Protestant means not only to speak

against something, but also to speak for something.

More than 30 years ago, a kind and gentle Franciscan friend said to me, “There is much more we hold in common than what separates us.” Since then I’ve tried to be like him.

Jeffrey Hammonds

christiancentury.org comment

As someone deeply interested in ecumenism and an Anglican convert to Catholicism, I would say Long is already catholic—part of the universal church to which all Christians belong (as cited in the Apostolic and Nicene creeds).

I know many Roman Catholics who don’t believe all of the Catholic teachings. Here in South Africa, for example, I think of Sr. Bernadette Ncube, a nun who was elected a member of parliament in 1994. She voted for the bill that introduced abortion to South Africa because she had seen the effects of backstreet abortions.

Chris Hill

christiancentury.org comment

Ioften wondered, even before I converted to Catholicism, if perhaps some of the internal messiness of the Catholic Church is the result of its having been abandoned for five centuries by those who are being called to help clean it up. This is not to blame the failures of the Catholic Church solely on the Protestants. But protests are so much more effective when done from within.

The reason Long gives for not (yet) being Catholic is that leaving Methodism would feel like a betrayal of those who brought him to faith. Yet if, as he says, Catholicism sees Protestantism as within its borders, how would that be a betrayal? How is “coming home” to Catholicism really a leaving of the ones you love, when home from a Catholic perspective is the whole world?

Jared Schumacher

christiancentury.org comment

September 17, 2014

Containing Ebola

Media reports on the outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in West Africa have highlighted the dangers of travel to the region, the decision by some airlines to suspend flights, and the debates about the effectiveness and availability of anti-Ebola drugs. The condition of two American missionaries who were infected and transported to Atlanta for treatment received much attention.

Behind these stories lie critical, ongoing issues of basic health care in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, and neighboring countries. Combating Ebola primarily involves rudimentary public health measures—the use of protective clothing, effective quarantines, the sharing of information, and widespread education.

The Ebola epidemic has exposed the fragility of health-care systems in Africa. For example, when told that frequent washing with soap and water is important in preventing transmission of the virus, one person asked: “How can we wash all the time if we have no clean water to wash with?”

Ebola is one of many diseases menacing West Africa. Poor sanitation, poverty, and lack of education cause people to die every day from typhoid, malaria, cholera, and other preventable and curable diseases. The Ebola epidemic has in some cases overwhelmed health clinics, leaving them unable to treat other conditions, and elsewhere fear of Ebola has caused many to stay away from doctors altogether, which likely means that deaths from non-Ebola cases will skyrocket. Joanne Liu, head of Doctors Without Borders, calls this development “an emergency unfolding within an emergency.”

The epidemic also reveals that government stability and trustworthiness are key components of health. Years of civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone not only undermined health-care systems but bred suspicion of the government, making it hard for officials now to convince people that the Ebola virus is real and that clinics can be trusted. In many regions, church groups are playing a large role in disseminating reliable information.

In calling for more international aid, Liu did not ask for exotic drugs or technology but for basic resources and education: “Health promotion campaigns and body collections are stalled for lack of vehicles or fuel,” she reported. “Epidemiologists are unable to work because of a lack of logistical support. And pervasive fears among communities that had never encountered Ebola have provoked riots against health workers.”

Reports on the Ebola outbreak coincided with President Obama’s U.S.–Africa Leaders Summit, designed to encourage trade and investment. Foreign investment in Africa reached a record \$80 billion this year, and the continent’s economic growth has outpaced that of the rest of the world. The Ebola outbreak is a dramatic reminder that economic growth is inseparable from advances in health care, education, and political stability. The need to help African nations contain the Ebola virus is an opportunity to address these structural issues as well.

Ebola is just one of many diseases menacing West Africa.

CENTURY marks

GERM WARFARE: Josephine Finda Sellu, a nurse supervisor, is on the front-line of the fight against Ebola in Sierra Leone. She lost 15 of her nurses in rapid succession. As other workers left the hospital, her family begged her to quit her job. Some of her colleagues have been abandoned by their families due to fear of the disease. Usually a tower of strength, Sellu cries when she talks about the nurses she's lost to the disease. She sometimes wishes she had become a secretary instead, but she sees her job as a healer as a calling from God (*New York Times*, August 23).

JOB OPENING: Mubarak Awad, a Greek Orthodox Catholic influenced by Quakers and Mennonites, could have become the Palestinian Gandhi. After his father was killed by Jewish freedom fighters in 1948, his mother taught her children to turn the other cheek. In 1983 Awad

opened the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence in Jerusalem, with the aim of fomenting mass nonviolent resistance to Israeli occupation. His peaceful efforts got him kicked out of the country in 1988. He now teaches nonviolence at American University. He remains optimistic about the prospects of nonviolent resistance in the Middle East, but fears the current conflict between Israel and Gaza is driving more people into the extremist camp (*Newsweek*, August 11).

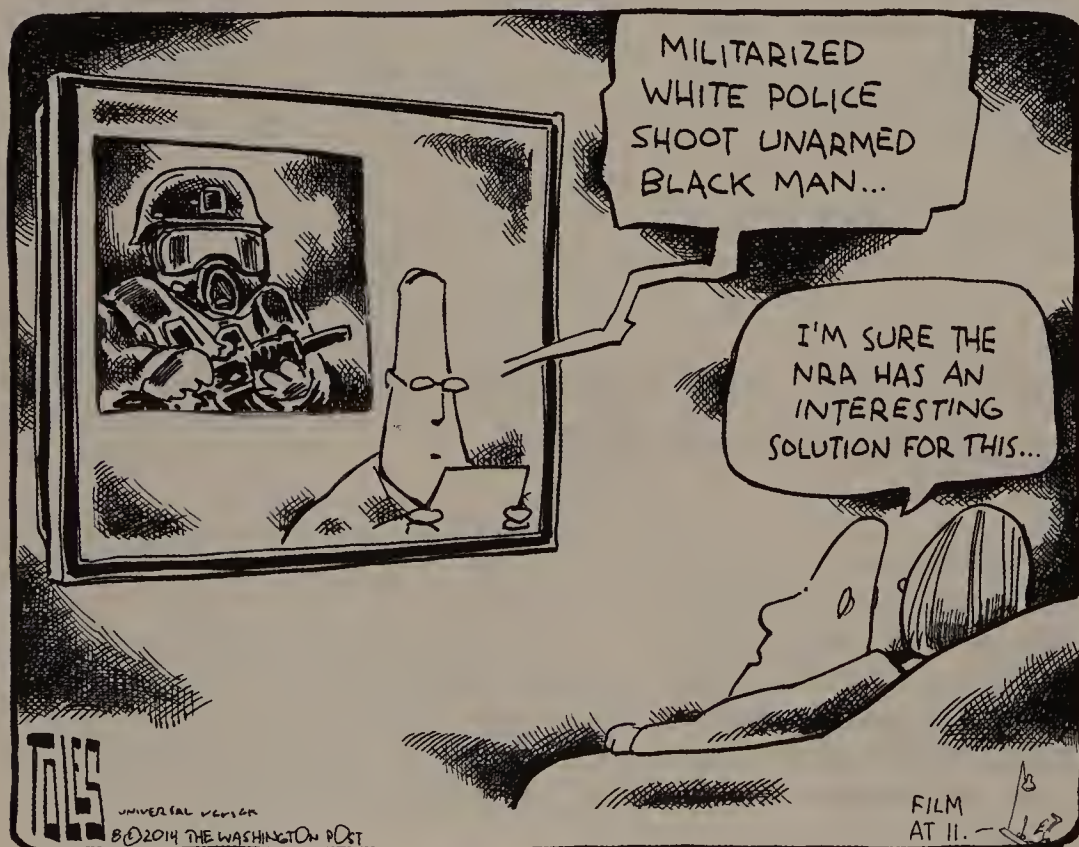
TWO-WAY STREET: Former Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, in an opinion piece in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* (August 14), says the liberation of Israel from violence and insecurity lies in the liberation of the Palestinian people from armed occupation. Tutu condemns Hamas for its missile launches against Israelis, but defends Palestinians' right to struggle for free-

dom from occupation. "Peace requires the people of Israel and Palestine to recognize the human being in themselves and each other; to understand their interdependence."

BLESSING ISRAEL: Several high-profile evangelical leaders traveled to Israel last month as a part of the "Christians in Solidarity with Israel" trip put together by the National Religious Broadcasters in response to the most recent conflict in Gaza. The trip had two purposes, according to Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council. "We are instructed in scripture not only to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, but are told that those who bless Israel will be blessed," Perkins said. "Secondly, it is in the national security interest of the United States to support Israel." Some evidence indicates that younger evangelicals are not as steadfast in their support of Israel as their elders and are more sympathetic to Palestinians (RNS).

SAVING CHURCHES: By one estimate 7,000 churches close down each year in the United States. A 2012 study predicted that 20 percent of the churches in Philadelphia would close within ten years. Many of these churches are architectural gems. Razing these buildings can be very expensive. A more satisfactory solution is to repurpose them, turning them into art and culture centers or housing units. The Mount Airy Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia is having 20 condominiums built on its property. The sanctuary will be leased back to the congregation for its continued use (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 4).

AMISH MAFIA? Mary Haverstick, a filmmaker from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, has taken on the makers of TV series



such as *Amish Mafia*, which exploit the Amish. She started a Facebook page called “Respect Amish,” and it grew rapidly into a movement. The local chamber of commerce, the council of churches, and a host of local politicians backed her challenge to the makers of *Amish Mafia*, which airs on the Discovery Channel. Amish scholar Donald Kraybill, who teaches at Elizabethtown College, says, “There’s no Amish mafia. There never was. The whole thing is a fabrication in the minds of the producers” (NPR, August 24).

HEADING SOUTH: Sensing that they are losing the culture wars in the United States, several North American evangelical leaders are taking the battle to Latin America. Mat Staver, head of the law faculty at Liberty University, and Samuel Rodriguez, a Latino preacher from California, have helped form a U.S.-Latin American coalition to oppose gay marriage, abortion, and pornography. They have already lost a battle in Argentina, Uruguay, and Mexico City, which have legalized gay marriage, but they are having some success in Peru. American conservative Christians were influential in fostering antigay legislation in Uganda (Reuters).

ON THE STREET: Mark Bustos, a stylist at an upscale salon in Manhattan, gives free haircuts to homeless people every Sunday, his only day off from work. He started the practice during a trip two years ago to the Philippines. The response was so enthusiastic that he decided to make the same offer in New York. Many of the people whose hair he cuts are very thankful. He especially remembers the man who, after seeing what he looked like with his new haircut, asked, “Do you know anyone that’s hiring?” (*The Week*, August 29).

CULTIC ATHEISM: Richard Dawkins, militant atheist and author of *The God Delusion*, is becoming an embarrassment to the agnostic/atheist/secularist community for the way he has developed a cult of personality. His website encourages people to join the “Reason Circle.” A donation of \$85 a month buys discounts on his merchandise and the chance to

“What I would say to anyone who is engaged in violence is that approach will not ultimately yield the greatest benefit for the community. It may temporarily accomplish an objective. If the philosophy of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth was one we all embraced, most of us would be without eyes and teeth.”

— Martin Luther King III, son of Martin Luther King Jr., when asked what he would say to violent protesters in Ferguson, Missouri (RNS)

“[President Obama] doesn’t realize that a great leader, a statesperson, doesn’t just occupy middle ground. They occupy higher ground or the moral ground or even sometimes the holy ground. But the middle ground is not the place to go if you’re going to show courage and vision.”

— Theologian Cornel West, accusing President Obama of not exercising leadership on the moral issues of our time, including racism in America (*Salon*, August 24)

meet someone from his foundation—but not Dawkins. For that you have to pay \$5,000 a year. For \$100,000 a year, backers get a private breakfast or lunch with the man himself. “At this point it is obvious to everyone except the participants that what we have here is a religion without the good bits,” says religion columnist Andrew Brown (*Spectator*, August 16).

GOOD NEIGHBORS: “Having good neighbors and feeling connected to others in the local community may help to

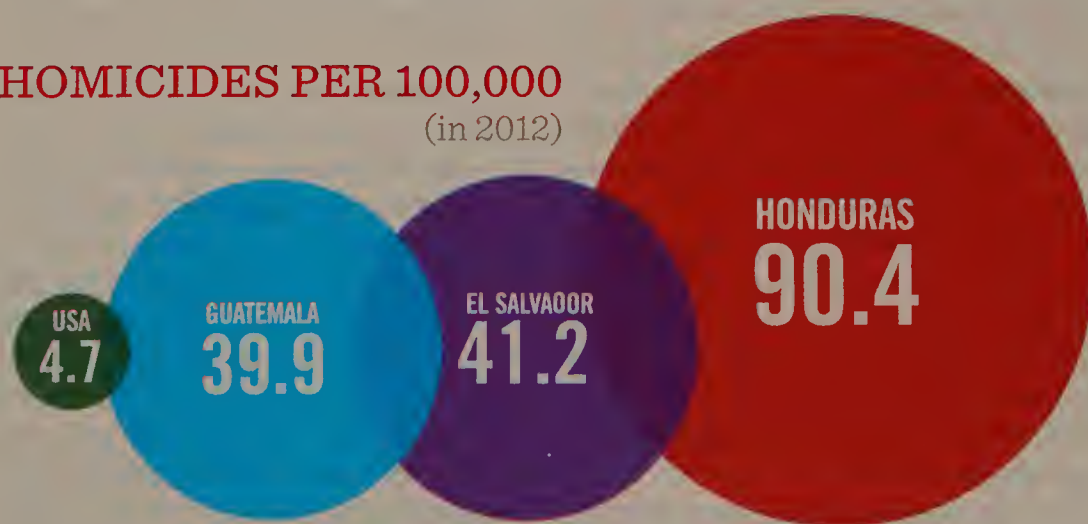
curb an individual’s heart attack risk,” according to a research team at the University of Michigan. Participants in the study were asked to rate their neighborhood on a scale of one to seven. For every point they gave their neighborhood, they had a reduced heart attack risk over the four years of the study. People who gave their neighborhood a total score of seven had a 67 percent reduced risk of heart attack compared to those who gave only one point—roughly the difference between a nonsmoker and a smoker (AFP).

FLEEING VIOLENCE

SOURCE: THE PROGRESS REPORT

The Central American children attempting to enter the United States are fleeing the most violent countries in the world.

HOMICIDES PER 100,000 (in 2012)



Honduras has the highest murder rate in the world, even higher than the civilian casualty rate in 2007 in Iraq at the height of the insurgency (62.2). El Salvador and Guatemala have the world’s fourth and fifth highest murder rates, respectively.

Militarized policing

by Tobias Winright

MICHAEL BROWN is dead, a young black man gone before he could start college and begin life as an adult. The life of Darren Wilson, the white police officer who shot and killed the unarmed Brown, has been forever changed, too. Since the August 8 shooting, protesters in Ferguson, Missouri, have faced a heavy-handed, heavily armed police response. This has prompted much national conversation about both racism and the growing militarization of American police forces.

The latter subject had been getting some attention lately, even before the

which this essentially military metaphor has had an impact on the self-definition of American police. He writes that police are “soldiers in a strange war that will never end,” risking their lives as a “final defense against the forces of darkness and evil” in the “continuing war against crime” while they patrol “the combat zone that is modern America.” Sasser notes that thousands of American cops are assaulted each year “with everything from fists and broken street signs to knives and, of course, guns.” Police feel like they are always potentially in danger, and in order to deal effectively

“way of life” for dealing with interpersonal conflict and social problems.

Police, too, are affected by such media portrayals of policing. In *The Badge and the Bullet* (Praeger, 1983), Peter Scharf and Arnold Binder name these media depictions “the mythology of police work,” especially with regard to viewing the gun as “the primary symbol of law enforcement,” the “tool of the trade,” and the “culturally defined essence of police work.”

This military approach gained traction in 1974 with the formation of Special Weapons and Tactics teams in many American police departments. SWAT teams are outfitted with special gear, including helmets, semiautomatic assault rifles, tear gas, and flash grenades. They represent a model that regards the use of force as the key characteristic of policing. Put differently, it views coercive power as the *raison d'être* of policing.

Criminologists have warned that the military model of policing may be the soil from which sprout the seeds of police brutality and excessive force. There is the belief “that being a law enforcement officer is akin to the work of a soldier on the frontlines,” write Victor Kappeler, Mark Blumberg, and Gary Potter in *The Mythology of Crime and Criminal Justice* (Waveland, 1993). “This pervasive sense that their mission is a dangerous one cannot help but affect the way that police officers deal with the public.”

Media have helped make the gun the primary symbol of law enforcement.

events in Ferguson. Radley Balko’s book *Rise of the Warrior Cop* (PublicAffairs, 2013) is a notable example. But as Balko acknowledges, the militarization of the police is not a new development. Over the years, others have noted it as well.

The best book on the subject, in my view, is John Kleinig’s *The Ethics of Policing* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). Kleinig examines the moral foundations of policing, the use of force, and several extant models of policing. The two primary models, at opposite ends of the spectrum, are the “crime fighter” and the “social peacekeeper.” During the 20th century, the former, which is also known as the military model of policing, became the primary paradigm in the United States.

In the popular book *Shoot to Kill* (Pocket, 1994), former police officer Charles W. Sasser evinces the extent to

with such threats they want certain crime fighting tools—including weapons, equipment such as helmets and body armor, and the ability to use force when necessary.

And it’s not just police themselves who regard their work as fighting a war on crime. As Jerome Skolnick and James Fyfe write in *Above the Law* (Free Press, 1993), the “military metaphor also colors the public’s expectations of the police.” In addition to the political rhetoric of “getting tough on crime,” Americans are likely influenced by popular depictions of policing, which focus mostly on crime fighting. According to Stuart A. Scheingold’s *The Politics of Law and Order* (Longman, 1984), TV and movie viewers often see “heroic males regularly and successfully using lethal violence as a way of avenging wrongs,” conveying the message that violence is an American

Tobias Winright teaches theological and health care ethics at Saint Louis University and is a former law enforcement officer. His Ph.D. dissertation at Notre Dame was “The Challenge of Policing: An Analysis in Christian Social Ethics” (2002).



© Matthew Brosseau

The military model alienates the police from the public, often leading to the dehumanization of the very people the police are pledged to serve and protect. Everyone is viewed suspiciously and cynically as a potential enemy. In turn, this makes it easier, according to Paul Chevigny in *Edge of the Knife* (New Press, 1995), for police “to abuse those who are the enemy, easier even to kill or torture them.”

Likewise, Skolnick and Fyfe assert that a “causal connection” exists between “the idea that cops are like soldiers in wars on crime” and the use of excessive force. Indeed, the war model of policing constitutes “a major cause of police violence and the violation of citizens’ rights,” and it “encourages police violence of the type that victimized Rodney King.”

It should be noted, however, that in actual daily work, a police officer deals with a large array of problems and incidents: intervening in domestic disputes, helping injured accident victims, dealing with people with mental illness, finding runaways, searching for lost children, informing people of the deaths of loved ones, directing traffic, stopping suicide attempts. The police spend the majority of their time—estimates range from 70 to 90 percent—in these kinds of activities, not using force to fight crime.

I used to work in law enforcement, and I recall that most of my fellow recruits in the police academy seemed to look for-

ward to and enjoy the firearms training the most.

“Unless and until police see themselves primarily as peacekeepers rather than as crime fighters,” Kleinig writes, “firearms will tend to be used unnecessarily.” In his view, the social peacekeeper model of policing better encompasses most of the responsibilities and tasks of police in society, and although there remains a place for the possibility of the use of force against an uncooper-

institutionally with Sir Robert Peel’s establishment of the “New Police” of Metropolitan London in 1829. (That’s where the term *Bobby* comes from.)

According to David Ascoli in *The Queen’s Peace* (Hamish Hamilton, 1979), Peel “was stubborn to the point of obsession that his ‘New Police’ should be seen to be free of all taint of militarism,” which is why they were required to wear a “quiet” uniform consisting of “a blue shallow-tail coat with white but-

Up to 90 percent of what police officers do does not involve force.

ative or threatening suspect, “its instrumental or subservient character is emphasized” in this model. Indeed, Kleinig suggests that had the Los Angeles police officers who participated in the beating of Rodney King understood themselves “primarily as social peacekeepers, for whom recourse to force constituted a last and regrettable option, events would almost certainly have turned out very differently.”

This social peacekeeper model has its historical roots in England, with its emphasis on community service and peacekeeping. Although the functional origins of policing may be traced to ancient communal self-policing (i.e., night watches), modern policing began

tons” and not the British military’s red coat. The primary object of this first police department, as explicitly reflected in its General Instructions from 1829, was the prevention of crime, and emphasis was placed on the use of persuasion, with physical force as a last resort—and using only the minimum force necessary for preventing or stopping a breach of the law.

Initially there was skepticism among the British public, with some calling the New Police derogatory epithets such as “Blue Locusts,” “Blue Drones,” and “Blue Devils.” Yet Ascoli notes that when a riot broke out at Hyde Park Corner in 1830, the mob was “met by only passive police resistance, a tactic

which seems to have bewildered the rioters who, bent on violence, were hoping for violence in return.” Because of their restraint in the use of force, the Metropolitan Police gained widespread public acceptance.

Also, the police were citizens working in partnership with their community. Their patrol duties—which consisted of walking regular beats in neighborhoods—included traffic control, the prevention of cruelty to children and animals, finding missing persons, the care of the poor and destitute, extinguishing fires, the inspection of weights, bridges, and buildings, and even waking people up for work.

This was the model of policing that was transplanted to Boston and New York City in the 19th century. Even so, when police began to wear uniforms and a badge in the 1850s, many worried that the police would turn out to be essentially a standing army, though police departments did not recruit from the military at that time. According to Robert Fogel-

son’s *Big City Police* (Harvard University Press, 1977), Americans “had a strong conviction that the police should have an essentially civilian orientation.”

The ethos changed after the Civil War, when the surplus of firearms began to find its way into the hands of the police. Then, in the early 20th century, well-armed gangsters such as Al Capone motivated the police to begin to arm themselves even more.

The military model of policing encourages the use of force.

In the 1990s this militaristic approach was moderated by community policing, basically another name for the social-peacekeeper model. Yet ongoing talk of a “war on crime” and a “war on drugs” kept the military model alive, and it was resuscitated especially by the “war on terror” and the surplus of military


weapons and equipment that police departments have received following the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I believe we need a larger paradigm shift back to the community policing or social peacekeeper model. If anyone doubts its effectiveness or believes it is unrealistic, consider how successful it has been in Nicaragua, which is the poorest country in Central America but has

the lowest crime rates—and, unlike other Central American nations with more militaristic police and higher crime, hardly any children seeking refuge in the United States.

Along with this general paradigm shift, we need further clarification of use-of-force guidelines. Since the 1980s, with important Supreme Court decisions such as *Tennessee v. Garner* (1985), police cannot use lethal force to stop the escape of a fleeing criminal suspect unless the “officer has probable cause to believe that the suspect poses a significant threat of death or serious physical injury to the officer or others.” That rule is the basis on which Wilson’s use of deadly force against Brown will be evaluated. Moreover, the “totality of the circumstances” will be considered, based on the “perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight.”

Ambiguity arises in the *Tennessee v. Garner* decision, however, because Justice Byron White, writing for the majority, added that “if the suspect threatens the officer with a weapon or there is probable cause to believe that he has committed a crime involving the infliction or threatened infliction of serious physical harm, deadly force may be used if necessary to prevent escape, and if, where feasible, some warning has been given.” This ambiguity needs to be addressed.

In the end, what’s needed is policing that reflects the force of law. Right now, it too often reflects the law of force. 

Bloodline

Consider its extravagant fertility! How dependably it breeds itself in the marrow to fill again what drains away, the rivers of bright platelets singing in their arterial dark

until a simple incursion, some sharp sever. A jag. An abrupt disclosure as our secret fluid spills against its will—whether a startle or a slow seepage, a prompt to remember our fragility.

When a bold splash on a lintel in Egypt signaled safety, a lifeguard against the death angel, *we* didn’t have to die; it was only a lamb, and a quick throat cut that flooded us into another life.

“His blood be upon us” echoes in that old yell of rejection. We can yield instead to be washed in grace, the scandal of mercy acting as God’s unlikely laundry.

Today the cup calls us to the altar rail, transfuses us as we drink deep, a stain that blots old grimes and dyes us with itself.

Luci Shaw

Time to enjoy the world

A day with no agenda

by Suzanne Guthrie

EVEN MY MOTHER joked that her youngest child emerged with an inclination to save the world. Despite my middle class / Long Island housing development / bourgeois origins, I discovered World Sorrow early and wanted to spend myself on the Greater Good. What else could I have been but a minister?

In my vocation I took Paul's guilt-provoking admonition to "be all things to all people" with staggering literalness. I started my day scanning the horizon for disaster via local, national, and international news. My car was an annex to my

and teach, and a writing project is on hiatus. My husband, now retired, seems to crave my company. We actually eat supper together. We do two crossword puzzles every day. We go drumming together on the town square on Sunday afternoons. (We live in Woodstock, New York, after all.) We take off for a drive into the Catskills without a plan. We watched the bluebirds raise two sets of hatchlings this summer from our back porch. Not watching them while doing something else . . . just watching. Oh, and I read books for pleasure.

you have to do meaningfully and well. It also means allowing time to handle emergencies.

One frantic morning years ago a young woman knocked on my office door. I was preparing for a program later in the day, so I asked her if she could come back another time. The look on her face woke me up to her distress, and I asked her to stay after all. I'm glad I did. She had been raped the night before and after a long night of medical procedures and questioning had come directly from the clinic to talk with a chaplain.

How many times, I wonder now, did my insane busyness make me unavailable to God and to my neighbor? Not to mention my family?

E. B. White wrote, "I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day." What I've discovered during these last few months of guilty inactivity is that the world doesn't seem to need me to improve it. Rather, I appreciate the work or play or the rest at hand. I watch the bluebird fledglings as if that's what I'm supposed to be doing and with only a slight heaviness of heart that I should be doing something else. I can almost imagine being present in the moment, being loving in a new way to God and to neighbor. Sometimes I'm almost drunk on birdsong and the scent of the breeze.

I can even imagine waking up one day with no agenda except to enjoy the world.



Suzanne Guthrie curates Soulwork Toward Sunday, a self-guided retreat on the Gospel lesson for the coming Sunday at EdgeOfEnclosure.org.

How many times did my busyness make me unavailable to my neighbor?

office, as were jails, courtrooms, diners, hospitals, and psyche wards. Wherever my parishioners went, I went. I prayed my way through the church directory and along the marginalia of that same directory where nonmembers hovered in the white spaces the same way they sat uncomfortably in the back pews ready to bolt.

The mighty river of urgency fed into my innate ocean of anxiety. Add to this a sense of duty, workaholism, perfectionism, and not-quite-but-pretty-close-to-pathological people-pleasing, and you get much "vanity and striving after wind" (Eccles. 1:14). Not to mention burnout.

I burned out. Spectacularly. Twice. And there was no mercy.

But these last few months, for the first time since about ninth grade, I'm not overly stressed. I don't have a church job, for one thing. A bout of ill health has curtailed traveling to preach

and teach, and a writing project is on hiatus. My husband, now retired, seems to crave my company. We actually eat supper together. We do two crossword puzzles every day. We go drumming together on the town square on Sunday afternoons. (We live in Woodstock, New York, after all.) We take off for a drive into the Catskills without a plan. We watched the bluebirds raise two sets of hatchlings this summer from our back porch. Not watching them while doing something else . . . just watching. Oh, and I read books for pleasure.

It never occurred to me in all these years to enjoy my life. In the thick of ministry I often joked that the best place to hide from God is in service to the church. "Be sure to take your day off!" colleagues piously admonished each other with a wink. Why the wink? Because, we reasoned, shouldn't we live at the insane pace of our parishioners—the working poor—who struggle along with two jobs, rare days off, and no flexibility? Like those parishioners who are docked pay when they need to go to the doctor or the DMV or get called to school to pick up their sick kid?

Am I ready to say now, in retrospect, that my solidarity only masked my natural tendencies to overdo it? Would the example of taking a regular holy sabbath have been a bad thing? A monk I know likes to talk about "holy leisure" as having enough time to do the things

Ferguson-area churches offer aid after police killing

In the weeks since the fatal shooting by police of Michael Brown, an unarmed African-American teenager, in Ferguson, Missouri, F. Willis Johnson has led prayer vigils, met with community leaders, and comforted protesters.

Johnson is pastor of Wellspring Church, a predominantly African-American United Methodist congregation, located about a block from the police station in the St. Louis suburb and less than a mile from where most of the protests have been taking place after Brown was shot August 9.

"The ultimate concern is this: under no pretense does someone deserve to lose their life, and in this case to have innocence stripped," said Johnson, who is the father of a teenage son. "Innocence is not defined by court law but by the fact all life is sacred. In our faith tradition, that is enough to stand on."

Wellspring Church, in partnership with the Association of Black Psychologists, has provided counseling to anyone in the community who requests it.

Johnson was interviewed by National Public Radio after embracing an 18-year-old blocking traffic at a protest. "It was to affirm him—and to affirm both of us—because in that moment, we were being disaffirmed," Johnson told NPR. "People who are hurting need to be affirmed in their hurt, people who are angry need to be affirmed in their anger."

Another local pastor who stood with protesters was Renita Lamkin, an African Methodist Episcopal elder in St. Charles, near Ferguson. She was shot by police with a rubber bullet during the first week of protests, the *Huffington Post* reported.

"We're not here to fight the police,"

Lamkin told *Huff Post*. "We're here to fight the system."

Some of the other protesters injured by tear gas and other measures have been given first aid by Greater St. Mark Family Church in St. Louis, a Baptist congregation. Police raided it August 20, according to local and national news reports.

In a video on Instagram, a social media site, a man identified by *Huff Post* as a church organizer said, "County police came out today to this humanitarian shelter, and they've effectively shut it down on a false charge that there were people sleeping in the building, and they're citing occupancy permits. Their information was incorrect."

Traci Blackmon, pastor of Christ the King United Church of Christ in nearby

Florissant, hosted a community forum with the Ferguson police chief and mayor three days after the shooting. More than 400 people from different racial backgrounds attended. Blackmon organized the forum after gathering nearly 500 signatures on a petition to the Ferguson police asking them to talk with members of the community.

Also in Florissant, Passage Community Church, together with other local congregations, organized a cleanup in Ferguson after the first few days of protests. Residents joined in when they saw volunteers carrying brooms and large garbage bags, collecting whatever they could find: rubber bullets, broken glass, liquor bottles, tear gas grenades. Joe Costephens, pastor of the Baptist congregation, said that although the



STAND FOR JUSTICE: Keith Lovett, Melik Smith, Victoria Smith, Linda Smith, and Antonio McDonald hold candles during an August vigil for Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri.

trash-collecting effort was a last-minute plan, more than 100 people joined the endeavor.

After working for two hours, nearly 20 people gathered in the parking lot of First Baptist Church in Ferguson and

held hands in prayer. They prayed for the family of Michael Brown and for businesses in the area that have been damaged by rioting that occurred amid largely peaceful protests.

"I needed to come out today just to

get some stability," said Gary Park, 34, a member of Passage and an auto mechanic who lives near the area in Ferguson where Michael Brown was shot and where protests erupted.

"I wanted some encouragement," he said.

More than 20 clergy from Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, UCC, and Jewish congregations went August 19 to the neighborhood where Brown lived and died to offer care.

"We, the clergy, in an unstructured way, knocked on doors to say, 'If you need prayer or counselors, we're here,'" said Felicia Scott, pastor of St. Jordan's UCC in Jeffriesburg. —Heather Hahn, United Methodist News Service; Anthony Moujaes, UCC news; Lilly Fowler, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*; added sources

National clergy issue interracial call for justice

AS Barbara Williams-Skinner collected signatures for a statement by leaders of African-American church groups about the Ferguson, Missouri, police shooting of Michael Brown, she found more people wanted to join in.

The general secretary of the National Council of Churches wanted to add his name, along with an Asian-American evangelical leader.

What started out as the "Joint Statement of Heads of Historic African American Church Denominations" has become an interracial cry for justice.

"It's touching hearts of people who have sons and who know that their sons would not be treated this way," said Williams-Skinner, cochair of the National African-American Clergy Network, on August 21. "They know it's wrong. They know it's wrong before God. And they are responding on a human level."

The statement, also spearheaded by Otis Moss Jr. and T. DeWitt Smith, veteran civil rights activists, calls on African-American churches to memorialize Michael Brown, the unarmed African-American teen who was shot and killed by a white police officer on August 9. It also urges contributions to a national fund to assist his family with pending legal expenses.

"In light of the long and bloody trail of lynching, deaths, and killings of African-American youth from Emmett Till, to Trayvon Martin, to Michael Brown, and scores of others throughout our nation, we call for action, justice, and the transformation of our society," the letter reads.

The statement calls for greater voter

participation and replacing elected officials with others who "represent the preservation of life in ethnic communities where a disproportionate amount of killings, unsubstantiated sentencing, and jail time are unwarranted means for perpetuating racism and bias against ethnic minorities."

Other faith groups have weighed in with statements, from the North American leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the World Council of Churches.

Geoffrey A. Black, the United Church of Christ general minister and president, traveled to Ferguson in late August at the invitation of the UCC Missouri Mid-South Conference.

"Two of the clergy I spoke with had moved to St. Louis from other parts of the country," Black said. "Their shared observation was that when they arrived in St. Louis they realized that it was a 'powder keg just waiting for a spark in order to explode.' Their conclusion was that the death of Michael Brown at the hands of a white police officer was the spark."

He visited the Canfield Green Apartments where Brown was shot, now a rallying place for mourners and protesters.

"It is clear that issues having to do with racial profiling, lack of concern or sensitivity to the real needs of the African-American community, lack of meaningful engagement across racial lines, and lack of political and economic empowerment of the black community in the region are real, significant, and must be addressed," he said. —Adelle M. Banks, RNS; Anthony

Moujaes, UCC News

Nuns honor Elizabeth Johnson, theologian criticized by U.S. bishops

Sister Elizabeth Johnson, who drew U.S. Catholic bishops' ire with what they consider to be radical feminist writings, received the top award of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious August 15 at its assembly in Nashville, Tennessee.

In her acceptance speech, the Fordham University theology professor lambasted the bishops for their criticism of her book *Quest for the Living God*, saying it appears they haven't read it.

"To this day, no one, not myself or the theological community, the media, or the general public, knows what doctrinal issue is at stake," she told the assembly of about 900 sisters representing 80 percent of the nation's nuns.

In her 20-minute acceptance speech, followed by a standing ovation, Johnson suggested the conference's support of her work prompted the investigation by the church's top enforcer of orthodoxy, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith.

Johnson's book includes chapters on black and feminist theology and interfaith engagement. She said book sales



DOCTRINAL DISPUTE: *The Leadership Conference of Women Religious honored outspoken Sister Elizabeth Johnson, professor of theology at Fordham, at its August assembly.*

skyrocketed after the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops criticized it.

The LCWR has been undergoing a Vatican-ordered doctrinal investigation since 2009. In 2012, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ordered the nuns' group to reform its statutes and appointed Seattle archbishop J. Peter Sartain to oversee changes, including a rewrite of the group's charter and approval of all speakers at future assemblies. In April, a top Vatican official warned the LCWR that in honoring Johnson it would provoke the Holy See.

"When the moral authority of the hierarchy is hemorrhaging due to financial scandals and many bishops who . . . cover up sexual abuse of children, a cover-up that continues in some quarters to this day, and thousands are drifting away from the church . . . the waste of time on this investigation is unconscionable," Johnson said.

Throughout the week, the conference's leaders discussed spirituality and doctrine while taking up church politics in closed sessions. The nuns declined any interviews about the conflict.

But the ongoing dispute broke into the open at times.

Sister Nancy Schreck, a former LCWR president who delivered the keynote address, said in an interview before the assembly that the LCWR's focus is the life of Jesus.

"Look at the four Gospels—they all

have nuances in who Jesus is," she said. "We need to figure out how we translate the message of Jesus to the world where we live. We need every creative interpretation of looking of Jesus that we can get."

It's unlikely the sides can come to a solution, said Bruce Morrill, a Vanderbilt University professor of theological studies and a Jesuit priest.

At the conflict's heart is a difference in approach to a hierarchical chain of command: the top-down, morals-emphasizing Vatican versus the collegial, social justice-oriented nuns.

"As far as the U.S. bishops and Vatican officials are concerned, this is not a debate," Morrill said. "The hierarchy expects the women religious to obey their directives." —Heidi Hall, RNS

Black churches address suicide, mental illness

The death of comedian Robin Williams has heightened awareness of suicide and mental health. But many African-American churches quietly began educating members on the issue well before.

"A lot of times in the past, African Americans have viewed severe depression and other mental illnesses as indicating a spiritual weakness," said Tamara Warren Chinyani, an instructor with the Mental Health First Aid program. "We're changing that paradigm around."

The National Council for Behavioral Health introduced the program in the United States in 2008, with the goal of helping people learn how to spot signs and symptoms of mental illness. The program began its focus on African-American churches this year.

African Americans are 20 percent more likely than non-Hispanic whites to report instances of serious psychological stress, according to the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health. And while more white teens carry out suicide than their black counterparts, more African-American teens (8.3 percent) attempt suicide than their white peers (6.2 percent).

Some of the people leading the effort to build awareness about mental illness have seen its most tragic consequences up close.

William and Dianne Young cofounded the National Suicide and the Black Church Conference about a decade ago after one of their congregants shot and killed herself under a large cross on the church grounds in Memphis, Tennessee. Fifty people attended the first biennial meeting, and about 500 attended the 2013 gathering.

"People will come to the church when they won't go to a mental health center," said William Young, who attended a July launch of a broader new initiative called the Mental Health and Faith Community Partnership.

The couple started "Emotional Fitness Centers" at ten churches in Tennessee, in hopes they will increase access to services and reduce the stigma associated with therapeutic care.

Dianne Young, the centers' director, said 722 people were screened during the most recent fiscal year, and 300 followed through with the plans they were given, some of which included hospitalization.

In Texas, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health will begin an \$850,000 grant program in October that will help ten African-American churches educate congregants about mental health for the next three years.

Program Officer Vicky Coffee-Fletcher said the foundation received an "overwhelming response" to the grant announcement.

"Pastors are excited about the chance to spread awareness about mental health in a way that capitalizes on their strengths as standard bearers in the community," she said.

Experts say many African Americans have long been hesitant to pursue medical assistance because of fears they may be discriminated against and because of recollections of notorious experiments on unsuspecting black men in the mid-1900s.

But Frankey Grayton of Edgewood Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., which hosted Warren Chinyani's recent training session, said it's time for congregants and clergy to acknowledge their



RAISING AWARENESS: *Tamara Warren Chinyani, an instructor with the Mental Health First Aid program, led a session at an African-American church in Washington, D.C., about mental illness.*

need to learn more and, when necessary, seek help.

"Quite frankly, we felt unprepared," said Grayton, who learned of the training from another pastor who had participated. "But I don't think that we as a community can ignore it."

Now his congregation is developing an action plan, which will range from offering in-house counseling to the bereaved, divorced, and unemployed to determining when they need to call 911 or otherwise seek professional help.

Before she started working directly with congregations, Warren Chinyani trained about 100 clergy and laypeople in two sessions last year sponsored by the Maryland affiliate of Volunteers of America.

The consultant, who used to attend a church in Michigan where a fellow member committed suicide about a decade ago, said she hopes more African-American congregations will step up to a greater role on mental illness, just as many have recently on HIV/AIDS with clinics, health fairs, and counseling.

As she shows videos of people who have recovered and supervises role-playing exercises to foster openness about mental health, she hopes the training will become as common as CPR.

"We want just as many people who are certified in CPR to become knowledgeable and equipped with the tools and skills necessary to help someone who may be experiencing a mental health crisis," she said. —Adelle M. Banks, RNS

Researchers tell faith communities to let trauma survivors forgive in their own time

The women came seeking healing. Many of these survivors of the Rwandan genocide had lost family members, and some had been raped and infected with HIV. More than a few were struggling just to make it to another day before they found Solace Ministries.

Sometimes it took a month or a full year before they spoke about their experiences with other survivors. When they did, even if it was only to say a few words before they broke down in tears, other survivors gathered around, embracing one another.

A passage from the book of Isaiah—"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God"—was the mantra for this ministry, which nurtured hope and reinforced belief in a God who had not abandoned them.

Yet one sermon topic required special discretion.

"They never, ever, ever preached forgiveness" until a survivor was able to go through a healing process, said Donald Miller, professor of religion and sociology at the University of Southern California. He has visited Rwanda 16

times and conducted more than 260 interviews with widows and orphans of the 1994 genocide.

Research has shown people who score high on forgiveness scales have significantly lower levels of blood pressure, anxiety, and depression and relatively high self-esteem and life satisfaction.

But forgiveness is also a deeply personal act, one that can harm trauma victims if it is coerced or demanded before they are able to come to terms with their pain and suffering, experts say.

One should not say the "f-word" to someone who has recently been traumatized, said Kenneth Pargament, a psychology professor at Bowling Green State University who is a leading scholar in the field of religion and health.

Many people who have survived trauma such as rape or domestic violence have feelings of self-contempt or self-loathing, as if they were somehow responsible for the crimes committed against them.

Asking them to forgive before they are ready can traumatize survivors again and leave them feeling disconnected and alienated from communities such as churches that can be vital to helping them heal, Pargament said.

In the case, say, of a battered woman continually returning to her spouse or an abusive cleric who is transferred from congregation to congregation, forgive-



DONALD MILLER

GATHERING OF SUPPORT: *A group meets at Solace Ministries, which serves survivors of the Rwandan genocide. Solace has been a focus of research by Donald Miller on healing and forgiveness.*



AFTER TRAUMA: A Rwandan genocide survivor at a meeting of Solace Ministries.

ness given inappropriately also can endanger the survivors and others.

Recently in the news was the decision by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell to give Baltimore Ravens star Ray Rice a two-game suspension after he was accused of assaulting his then fiancée, now wife.

Goodell elicited testimony from the woman in front of Rice and his attorney. He said he took into account Rice's contrition in making the decision.

To advocates for abused women, Goodell's words evoke a time when clergy would routinely intervene on behalf of abusive husbands, urging the wife to take her spouse back for the sake of the marriage.

So how can faith communities help trauma survivors on their journey to healing that may one day enable them to reap the benefits of true forgiveness?

Here are three suggestions from researchers and those experienced in working with survivors:

1. Support: "The first thing is to surround the people with care and compassion," said Pargament, editor of the American Psychological Association's *APA Handbook of Psychology, Religion and Spirituality*. "Just to listen, that's a huge gift."

The need for support became clear to

Miller in his research with genocide survivors in Rwanda.

"You have to care. You have to support, and you have to allow survivors to go through a process," said Miller, author of the upcoming book *Healing, Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda*. "Forgiveness occurs over a long period of time, years, and even then there is a sense that it's never completed."

2. Educate: A critical step that churches can take to promote a healthy path to forgiveness is education, said Robert Enright, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and cofounder of the International Forgiveness Institute.

Such work includes helping people understand that forgiveness is a free gift for the person who was wronged. Forgiveness is not so much for the perpetrator as it is a way for the victim to gain release from the trauma, Miller said.

In a journal article, Enright and Chad Magnuson of Liberty University advocated a comprehensive program that includes forgiveness training for church leaders.

3. Challenge: One study of 1,200 abusive men in the Northwest found that faith communities can be crucial in providing the practical and spiritual support to begin to move violent men to a sense of empathy and accountability.

Faith-based intervention also can discredit dangerous theological ideas that the abused must be submissive and provide resources to allow the abusers to envision a different future.

Forgiveness is not about condoning or forgetting the transgression and may or may not involve some form of reconciliation, Enright said.

Nor may forgiveness be possible until well down the road for people who have experienced severe trauma. A young woman in Rwanda who was beaten and sexually assaulted while her other family members were killed may never be able to forgive.

And only those who were abused can decide whether to grant forgiveness, Enright said.

"It's their call when they're ready." —David Briggs, the ARDA.com

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Congress creates envoy for religious minorities persecuted in Asia

As Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria send religious minorities fleeing for their lives, Congress has created a new job at the State Department: Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia.

Those regions "are the hot burning center" of the global problem of religious persecution," said Katrina Lantos Swett, who heads the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which Congress created in 1998 to monitor the issue independent of the State Department.

Advocates for global religious freedom have lobbied for the position for years, and some say it is possible that the White House will combine the envoy's duties with those of the larger portfolio of the ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom.

The White House on August 20 declined to comment on that possibility. President Obama's choice for the ambassador-at-large job is Rabbi David Saperstein, who has led the Washington office of Reform Judaism for four decades. His nomination is pending before the Senate.

"A lot of people feel he would do an excellent job if this was rolled into his portfolio," Lantos Swett said. She also noted that it seems as if Congress intended the ambassador-at-large and the special envoy to be two separate positions.

"I have confidence that Saperstein, whatever his title, can make a difference" if he is given the authority and resources those positions warrant, said Thomas Farr, director of the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs.

But Representative Frank Wolf (R., Va.), a lead sponsor of the bill for the special envoy, said the two jobs call for two people.

"There needs to be a person solely focused on the Middle East," said Wolf spokesman Dan Scandling. "What is happening there demands the total—and focused—attention of a special envoy. The



TWO ROLES? *David Saperstein awaits Senate confirmation to be ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom. Congress has created a special envoy role that some think Saperstein can also fill.*

ambassador-at-large has the world. The special envoy would focus entirely on the Middle East.”

He added that while the ambassador must be confirmed, the envoy could be appointed and start serving far faster.

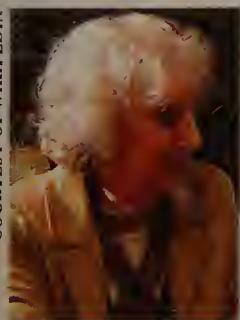
The office of the special envoy comes with a \$1 million budget, according to the law, signed by Obama August 8.

In recent months, the Islamic State has rampaged across Muslim and non-Muslim communities, demanding that they choose conversion or death and kidnapping girls and women. But militant forces and governments imperil other religious minorities in the Middle East and South Central Asia, as detailed in the annual U.S. report on international religious freedom.

Asked for comment on the special envoy, White House spokesman Shin Inouye confirmed that the president had signed the bill that created the job and urged the Senate to confirm a new ambassador-at-large.

“We are hopeful the Senate will quickly confirm Rabbi Saperstein to this important position,” said Inouye. —Lauren Markoe, RNS

People



■ **Estela Barnes de Carlotto**, president and founder of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina—a World Council of Churches partner—has been reunited with her grandson, who was born in a death camp during Argentina’s dictatorship.

Guido Montoya Carlotto, 35, a musician, volunteered to undergo a DNA test after having doubts about his identity. He was a match with Carlotto, whose daughter, Laura Carlotto, was abducted and imprisoned while pregnant during the military dictatorship that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983. She was killed shortly after she gave birth, and her infant was given to a childless family. The dictatorship did this with many other children, usually giving them to a family with a military connection.

Since the time of the dictatorship, the Latin American Council of Churches and other members of the WCC have accompanied the work of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo as they sought justice for their children and grandchildren who disappeared from detention centers during the dictatorship.

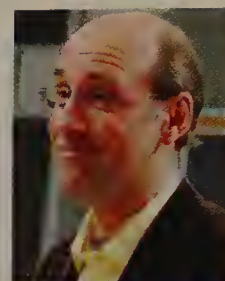
Frank de Nully Brown, bishop of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina, wrote to Carlotto expressing joy that the search into which the mothers and grandmothers put so much dedication has paid off again. “We thank God the giver of life for the recovered grandchildren, and we ask Him to continue to strengthen the mothers and grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in finding their beloved ones,” he wrote.

Charles Harper, former head of the WCC human rights program for Latin America, said that among the “disappeared” were hundreds of young political opponents, some of them parents of infants or children yet to be born. The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, building on their campaign as Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, sought support in their search for their missing grandchildren.

With Montoya Carlotto, the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo have found 114 of the children, now adults, who were abducted under military rule. Yet more than 400 are still “at large,” Harper said. Carlotto has received prizes from the United Nations in human rights (2003) and peace (2010).

■ **Mark Bowald**, a scholar in scriptural hermeneutics, has been named general editor of *Christian Scholar’s Review*, an interdisciplinary journal. Bowald’s term will begin May 1, 2015. The editorial board, representing the 41 Christian colleges and

universities that sponsor the publication, chose Bowald through an online ballot. Bowald is associate professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. He received his master’s and doctoral degrees in theology from Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto, following a degree in divinity from Grand Rapids Theological College and a bachelor’s degree from Grace College (Indiana). Bowald founded and chairs the steering committee of the Reformed Theology Consultation of the Evangelical Theological Society. For the past six years he served as associate editor in theology for *CSR*.



COURTESY OF MARK BOWALD

■ **David Vásquez-Levy** will be the 13th president of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, after a vote by the school’s board of trustees. “In this radically changing world, theological education needs new thinking,” said Boyung Lee, faculty and presidential search committee member. “I see David as already living into that changed reality.”

Vásquez-Levy graduated from Texas Lutheran University, earned an M.Div. degree from Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and holds a D.Min. degree in preaching from the Association of Chicago Theological Schools. He went on to become pastor at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Batesville, Indiana. Since 2001, he has served as campus pastor at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa.

In response to the 2008 raid in Postville, Iowa, in which 400 immigrant workers were arrested, Vásquez-Levy co-led the Postville Relief Effort, providing food, housing, and legal resources. He also advocated for the implementation of more humane immigration policies and in the years since has spoken at a congressional hearing on immigration policy, working closely with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services and attending two White House briefings. Vásquez-Levy will begin in the role on January 1, 2015.



COURTESY OF DAVID VÁSQUEZ-LEVY

LIVING BY The Word

Sunday, September 21

Philippians 1:21–30

A MULTIGENERATIONAL group from our church and school traveled to Kenya to visit a school with which we have a long relationship. Our group pitched in with students and villagers to make bricks for a classroom addition. In the course of that effort, we learned the Swahili word *harambee*, which means “working together for a common cause.”

We decided to use that word for the church and school’s annual theme. We cast about for a Bible verse to back it up and decided on the phrase, “striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,” adapted from the NRSV translation of Philippians 1:27.

The school faculty, however, did not like the word *striving*. While it means making a great effort, it can also mean struggling against opposition or contention. Strife is not something to be encouraged in the classroom.

Like most congregations, ours has had its share of strife. And throughout history, Christians have often strived side by side *against other people*. With the strife of pogroms, Crusades, and the Thirty Years’ War in view, we reasoned that *striving* was not a word we wanted in our theme verse.

We consulted other Bible translations. They all had something like *striving*. One even said *fighting*—definitely not classroom or congregation ready. So the faculty members decided to paraphrase the verse themselves. They did so with my blessing, settling on “working together for the sake of the gospel.” I dubbed it the Authorized Faculty Translation (AFT), available soon in a black leather, red-letter edition.

In retrospect, I wish I had pushed back against the faculty’s objections to the word *striving*. We missed a great opportunity when we chose to rewrite the text.

In the parables, Jesus takes what’s familiar to his audience and lays it down alongside what isn’t. Agrarian people knew the small size of a mustard seed; they were aware it produces a large bush that provides a home for many birds. The kingdom of God is like this, says Jesus. We understand why a man who finds a treasure hidden in a field will rebury the treasure and buy the field. The man’s ethics are not the point. Jesus says the kingdom of God is like this, hidden in our midst. We understand it is a treasure we long to uncover and possess.

Paul too uses language and concepts his readers would have understood well. He borrows regularly from the marketplace, the courtroom, and architecture. Here the reference point is military: “striving side by side” is what Roman soldiers did. In and around Philippi, a large number of former Roman army officers were given land grants and settled with their families.

So the Philippians would have read this and thought immediately of the phalanx, of infantrymen with shields interlocked and swords at the ready. An opponent never faced just one or two soldiers, but always a whole formation.

I served a congregation in Virginia Beach, near a naval air station. The congregation included U.S. Navy pilots and their families. When these pilots heard this passage, they pictured the wing formation they practiced over and over. Their training included repeated practice of this tactic, so that no matter what happened they would not break formation. Should they ever face combat, their survival depended on this.

I arrived at this congregation with a bias against those who serve in the military. I discovered that my biases were wrong. The people there were devoted to peace. Like Luther, they understood the military’s role in society. They served in order to restrain evil and promote the common good.

Paul does not use military imagery to glorify warfare. Instead, he subverts this imagery. He turns the language of empire inside out and breaks the imagery open to new meaning. That new meaning unfolds as Paul begins the sentence, writing, “Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Striving side by side is part of the gospel-worthy life.

We are to strive side by side with one mind, the mind of Christ. A few short verses later, Paul tells us to “have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not exploit imperial power but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.”

The phalanx Jesus led was a ragtag band of disciples who would have nothing to do with each other except that the gospel brought and held them together. Angel squadrons did not fly in combat; they attended Jesus on the cross. In the old order, the one raised from the dead gets even with those who deserted him. He wreaks vengeance on those who falsely accused him and put him to death. In the new creation, Jesus gathers his scattered disciples and invites even his enemies to strive side by side for him, not for Caesar. He is Lord of a new commonwealth in which there will be no more sickness, sorrow, war, or death.

The language of empire is subverted throughout the epistles. “The peace of God which passes all understanding,” Paul writes in Philippians 4:7, “shall garrison your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” In Ephesians 6, the gospel of peace is part of the armor of God.

In our school and congregation, we missed an opportunity to teach the way Paul taught, to redefine striving and strife and explore what this looks like in God’s new creation. However imperfectly we might have achieved this, we would have had a hand in uncovering the treasure hidden in the field, until Christ comes again and makes manifest the kingdom of God.

Reflections on the lectionary

Sunday, September 28

Ezekiel 18:1–4, 25–32; Matthew 21:23–32

EZEKIEL STEPS right into the middle of a group of people busy at that most ancient of activities, going all the way back to Eden: the blame game.

Ezekiel voices God's critical word. "It's not our fault," the people respond. "The problems we face are because of our parents' misdeeds." They quote a proverb to Ezekiel: "The parents eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge."

Jesus too has constant run-ins with those who would be blameless. In this week's Gospel reading, his run-in is with the chief priests and elders. They say to him, "By what authority have you ridden into Jerusalem as some kind of Messiah, charged into the temple, and chased out the merchants selling animals for the sacrifices? By what authority do you teach the people, and who gave you that authority?"

The question is a trap: Jesus can either walk into a blasphemy charge or lose credibility with the people. Instead, he asserts authority over his interrogators by answering their question with a question of his own—one that poses its own trap: "By what authority did John baptize?" Say it's by human authority, and they're in trouble with the people; say it's by God's authority, and everyone will want to know why they did not get baptized, too. So the chief priests and elders say, "We don't know." That's a safe choice. Sometimes, "I don't know" is the most honest answer.

But they aren't being honest. These religious leaders did not submit to John's baptism because it was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and in their view they had nothing to repent. They bore no blame, at least none for which they would seek John's baptism or Jesus' mediation.

We are no different. We live increasingly in a victims' culture. People seek to dodge personal responsibility for their misdeeds. A friend relates a story about her grandson Logan, a toddler. His mother came upon him in the bathroom with the family dog. Logan was standing with his back to his mother, swatting at the toilet paper roll over and over again, sending streams of bathroom tissue to the floor. His mother said, "Logan." He turned toward her and without pause pointed his finger at the innocent bystander and said, "Dog."

We laugh at Logan. However, the stakes are high in the blame game. We play it because we fear the consequences of being wrong. We may be punished by our parents, have to pay the fine for a speeding ticket, or be humiliated by an unforgiv-

ing electorate. According to Ezekiel, the highest stake of all is facing God's judgment.

I think we play the blame game because we hear the echo of God's judgment in accusations made against us. We don't measure up. We are not the people God created us to be. God's judgment is deadly for us. This is why critical words have such power over us, why we cannot stand being wrong and have to shift the blame elsewhere. At some deep level, we know our lives are at stake.

The blame game is about being in the right, being righteous. But it's a game no one wins. The truth I know about myself is that only death will put an end to my sinfulness. I can try all I want to shift the blame, but I cannot do anything about death. For a problem this big, we shall have to look to God. Who is going to get me past this except God? God is standing there in the very trap posed by these questions. Jesus stands neck-deep in John's baptism.

The trap's spring is the question by which Jesus begins his parable. "What do you think?" he asks. Be careful. Be cautious before you point the finger too quickly at someone else. The one who submits to John's baptism is the obedient son in Jesus' parable. Standing with the chief priests and elders, Jesus is the

We play the blame game because we fear the consequences of being wrong.

only one who qualifies. John's baptism was a watery vineyard, to be sure, but one from which good fruit grows, the fruit that is the son of Mary's womb.

Jesus submits to John's baptism in order to line up with all those who accept their blame and acknowledge their need of God's grace. And there he is, God's grace in the flesh.

We play the blame game because we are filled with guilt and are eager to be rid of it. "Pass it to me," Jesus says. "Play the blame game with me and only me. I'll take all you've got." And he carries all our blame to his grave. Rising to new life, he absolves us; he pronounces us free. This is the rhythm of the baptized life.

The tax collectors and prostitutes get it, says Jesus. They know they don't have a leg to stand on before God. They see the foolishness of trying to blame someone else for their lives. Who would believe that? They end up with lives transformed and turned around, entering the kingdom with the obedient son, the way to new life.

The author is Bruce Modahl, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in River Forest, Illinois.

From survival to love

by Bethany Sollereder

THE WORLD WATCHES in horror as rebel extremists surge across Iraq. Videos graphically depict the daily violence in Syria. Closer to home, yet another gunman has razed innocent victims in a public place. Behind closed doors, domestic abuse abounds—incidents per year in the United States alone are estimated at over 960,000.

How can we possibly think that a God of love has created this violent, hatred-filled world? It is one of the hardest questions Christians face.

I did not expect to find an answer to this question when I first came across Andrew Elphinstone's book *Freedom, Suffering and Love*. Elphinstone was an aristocratic clergyman trained at Eton and Oxford. Queen Elizabeth was a bridesmaid at his wedding. What could this entitled man have to say to about violence and injustice?

But it turns out that his essay on love and suffering—which combines insights from evolutionary biology, psychology, theology, and spirituality—speaks of the complexities of the human heart with incredible force while remaining almost entirely jargon free. *Freedom, Suffering and Love* was published posthumously from the author's notes in 1976 and promptly forgotten.

Why does a world created by the God of love contain so much suffering and unrest? Elphinstone's answer links the evolutionary process, with all its ruthless violence and competitiveness, to the process of love as it is formed in the human heart. He shows that "the present primacy of pain and unrest in the world is part of the raw material of the ultimate primacy of love."

How can this be? First, he argues that the processes of physical and spiritual formation are analogous. The physical world is shaped by cataclysmic forces. Volcanoes, earthquakes, and meteorites shape the earth's development. (The crustal plate slippage in 2004 that caused the Indian Ocean tsunami released more energy than 20,000 atomic bombs, and it was just one of countless formative events in earth history.) "By analogy," Elphinstone writes, "the forming of a human personality, from smallest biological origin to something sufficiently splendid to be what religions call Godlikeness, must be of still more formidable creative significance. What we are ourselves seeing and taking part in is the continuing act of God's creation, no longer at a physical level but at a spiritual, of which the raw materials are the more vulnerable and explosive ones of human feeling, thought, emotion, and will."

For Elphinstone, the ubiquitous demonstrations in humans of selfishness and violence are not evidence of a world gone wrong; rather, they show the human person ripe for radical transformation. The passions produced by evolution are the raw ingredients of love, awaiting "divine alchemy." Love is not the opposite of aggression, or joy the opposite of rage. Rather, love and joy are the transmuted forms of aggression and rage. And the process of change from explosive anger to transformed love

Forgiveness is the response that catalyzes change.

is slow and precarious. "There need be no surprises if this phase of creation, not now in the making of inanimate rock, ocean or hill, but of men and women striving towards their completion, is also, and even more, turbulent and restless."

Part of the reason for this turbulence is the primacy of pain in the process. Human aggression and self-defensiveness are rooted in response to pain, or in the effort to avoid it. When hurt, we retaliate. When threatened, we bare tooth and claw. In evolutionary development, these responses were necessary to survival.

But now that humanity is called into the role of being the image and likeness of God, a new law prevails. Love must now predominate over our evolutionary instincts, and our response to pain is the hinge point in that change. Forgiveness is the radical response that catalyzes change.

Second, Elphinstone argues that we need to revise our narrative of human origins in light of evolution. In the way the story is often told, Adam and Eve were created as perfectly moral and perfectly rational beings. Love was part of their makeup from the start. Then, in an incoherent and unanticipated act of sin, they plunged from the height of original perfection into the world of sin, temptation, and violence that we know today.

Elphinstone would revise this narrative this way: in place of a perfect couple in a pleasant garden, our nonhuman ancestors

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were engaged in a long struggle for survival. They moved sharply in response to pain, they were protective of their own and aggressive toward perceived threats. Love was totally absent among them. They had skill, strength, intelligence, even altruism, but not love. Love is a uniquely human attribute—or perhaps we should say it is a divine attribute, imparted to humanity—that transcends the evolutionary process and shapes us into hybrids of earthly and heavenly forms. Somewhere along the evolutionary process, nascent humanity acquired the ability to exercise a moral will over our innate desires, and with that came the capacity both to sin and to receive divine love and make it our own.

When we think of humans created in a moment by divine fiat, we overlook what a mighty achievement it is to love. In evolutionary terms, love is the very latest addition to life. It took countless millennia to arrive at love, and we stand only on the brink of its emergence. Every journey into new environments has come with massive struggle and great cost. Transformation into the realm of love is no exception.

The evolutionary process, however, is not enough on its own to develop the rare jewel of love. Evolution can only form passions for survival—all the violent, aggressive, and even cooperative and tender passions. The existence of these passions is absolutely necessary to God's work. To reconstruct these into love is the work of God, and God's workshop is the human heart.

Imagine drinking a pint of beer. Not an insipid mass-produced lager, but a rich, full-bodied craft ale, hand-pumped from the cask. Or, if beer is not your thing, visualize a warm loaf of bread just pulled from the oven: the crisp, lightly browned crust tearing to reveal the soft, nutty insides; the aroma wafting up as you raise it to your mouth. We enjoy these experiences, yet none of us would enjoy the raw materials of grain, hops, yeast, and salt if they were set before us in that form. The processes of fermentation in beer and baking in bread transform the unsavory ingredients into mouth-watering food. At the same time, the desired result would be impossible without the existence of the raw materials. You cannot have sweet beer without bitter hops. You cannot have rich-tasting bread without

sharp salt. Likewise, you cannot, according to Elphinstone, have the joy of love without the rage of hate. We therefore cannot object to God's goodness when we see around us a world of violence. This is the means to produce love.

Bread and beer are not found in nature. It takes a further work of human culture and labor to produce them. When we look at the evolutionary process, we are taken aback by its ruthless suffering. Darwin famously exclaimed, "What a book a devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering, low, and horribly cruel works of nature!" In all this mess, why is there no reflection of God's love? Why, a person might ask walking through a vast prairie, is there no bread anywhere? But take a baker to a field of wheat and she will see the potential for something quite different. We look at a world of violence and wonder where God is. God looks at a world full of unformed passions and sees the seeds of the kingdom.

Elphinstone's approach explains another rather startling reality: those we love most are often also the targets of our most severe hatred and rage. These forces—love and rage—are the same basic substance of passion; they seem just a hairsbreadth apart. It is because anger is in the precarious process of being transmuted into love that the two flash up almost simultaneously inside us. They lie next to each other in the soul and are powered by the same energy. Both are at work pulling our hearts toward opposite actions in a battle for the self.

Thomas Merton once said, "To be a saint is to be myself." Spiritual writers often speak about dropping the false self and allowing the true self to emerge. This imagery of the false self as a mask or a shell is sometimes appropriate, since we can disguise ourselves to please others—to show what they demand in order not to be rejected or to avoid pain. But the picture might also imply that when we get behind the false selves, when we take off the masks, we will find a good—if perhaps injured—self. When we look inside ourselves and find not a cringing child but a gale-force whirlwind of tangled desires, we quickly shut the door again and pretend we never looked.

Elphinstone's approach explains this unsettling discovery. We do not find the true self behind our false selves. When we get

below the masks, we find the primal, raw materials of a true person. We go looking for bread and get a mouthful of flour and salt.

We still build false selves, of course, but they do not always resemble masks. The barrier between our untransformed self and others is more like the type of enclosure gates around the velociraptor pen in the film *Jurassic Park*. It exists to keep others safe from the devouring and dangerous passions inside. Even we ourselves can be terrified by the volatile and uncontrollable strength of the untransformed inner self.

Nor are the powers of the inner self left unguided or undirected. The untransmuted self has had 3.5 billion years of evolutionary training to sharpen its skills of self-preservation, to build its strength, to learn its perilous cunning. This self is not evil (evil, like love, is a formed moral attribute), but she is a keen and powerful survivalist. When our small rational self stands in front of this roaring ocean, it is easily overpowered, tossed like so much driftwood in a storm. We find ourselves doing what we do not want to do, and not doing what we want to do. After several painful encounters, after we scrape ourselves wounded from the floor when the attack of passions has subsided, we begin to build yet higher barriers to keep others away.

It is not always out of shame, or to avoid being hurt oneself, but out of a desire to protect others from this raw self, as an act of compassion for a world that is already suffering. Once the

wall is built, the imprisoned inner self reacts like any neglected thing: it attempts more and more aggressively to get out, desperate for the freedom and nurture that is its life, becoming even more unruly and unpredictable, or it quietly goes into a death-like coma. The latter case is sometimes the more difficult, because it is more likely that the person will begin to confuse the façade for the reality, since there is no more noise or disruption from within. In this case, life is lived controlled and passionless, more machine than human. In the former case, anger and desperation erupt without any hope of control. We live afraid of our desires and increasingly distance ourselves from others—for who would face the danger of engaging this feral self?

B leak as it may seem, there is good news in all of this: the strength of the untransformed self is directly correlated with the capacity for love in the new self. If the passions with which evolution had endowed us were meager and mild, then our love would be pale and weak. Because our untrained desires are almost unimaginably strong, we have the realistic hope that our love—once emerged—will be as strong as death, which many waters cannot quench nor floods drown (Song of Songs 8:6–7).

There remain three choices. The first option is to return harm for harm, to proliferate pain in the world by indulging in every petty act of revenge or cruelty. In this case, the natural human propensity for aggressive passion turns to evil through the catalyst of the human will. (In Elphinstone's thought, it is the devil who pulls those natural desires toward evil. I don't deny that option entirely, but I think the human will can be drawn to evil easily enough on its own.)

Or second, we can hide our passions, beat them down, deny them, suppress them, jail them. We can cover our strong emotions with masks of rationality, trading our humanity for the certainty of cold logic. We will refuse to see others' true selves and leave others blind to ours. The inner person is never transformed and remains untrusted.

Or third, we can take the terrible risk of accepting our passions and allowing God to do the work of transmuting them into the love and joy that properly forms the human soul. The key to this transmutation is forgiveness.

"Forgiveness," writes Elphinstone, "is specifically a matter of dealing with pain." Forgiveness is the choice to accept pain inflicted by another and to refuse to return that pain upon the perpetrator. It is a choice to end the cycle of violence and the spread of hurt. It comes only at a great cost. If someone hurts us and we hurt them back, we feel vindicated. We have, following our evolutionary impulses, reminded them of the cost of meddling with us, thus protecting ourselves against future harm from the same quarter.

To refuse to return harm for harm works against our natural instincts. Every evolutionary nerve screams to flee or to fight. It is much easier to react to pain with anger and aggressiveness. But love's endeavor is to approach pain head-on, to stand against it, and to remain undeterred through it. By going through the process of pain, love opens up a new option of finding healing, and turning the pain from the agent of evil to the use of good.

Elphinstone's approach does not solve pain. The practice of love does not remove pain from one's life, or protect one from

In the alley

Here's a story. My first job, at fifteen, was in a bakery. Cleaning the vast foul pots and kettles and baking pans. At night, for hours, alone, with horrifying chemicals, & Finally locking the shop and trudging home in the dark. I hated it from the first hour but I couldn't quit instantly. Because I was afraid to be teased and be mortified. This Went on a week. The back door to the bakery was in an Alley that looked like a good place to get shot. One day As I shuffled sadly down the alley I saw a slumped man Sitting by the back door, smoking. I didn't know him & Figured I was about to get rolled. I was sort of relieved, To be honest, because then I'd have a decent excuse for Quitting. But when I got there the man stood up, and he Said boy, I run the shop next door, and I see you in here Working, and I bet you have not eaten, and that's awful Hard work, I know how that guy leaves his kitchenware, So here's a sandwich. Now, it's not from *me* exactly but From my wife who has a real sharp eye. So there you go. I quit a few days later, and at my dad's instruction I quit Face to face with the baker, who was furious, and it was No fun at all, but then I went and said thanks to the lady. Even now sometimes I see that man smoking in the alley, And standing up, and being kind to a kid he didn't know. Even now I'll be walking along and suddenly there he is, Waiting to be kind. We think we are alone but we aren't.

Brian Doyle

its hurt. Indeed, sometimes the choice to forgive will mean that we will suffer more, because we will not experience the relief of revenge. What love can do is stop the proliferation of evil and therefore the spread of pain beyond oneself. Instead of returning hurt for hurt, love absorbs the hurt and returns good. Far from protecting or eliminating pain from the life of the lover, the response of love can leave one terribly vulnerable.

One is not left defenseless, however, because although it may not initially seem so, the power of forgiveness is powerfully compelling to the forgiven. Let a person know that they are truly forgiven, and a whole lifetime of change may not pay the debt of gratitude. In this exchange of forgiveness, the lover is transformed away from the natural instinct to hurt and becomes more Christlike. Meanwhile, the forgiven is either transformed by the touch of grace or, at the very least, not provoked into any further action by receiving fresh violence.

Elphinstone's insight also casts new light on the traditional narratives of sin, salvation, and redemption. Seen in light of evolution, the event of Jesus on the cross comes into sharper focus. What did Jesus do in that momentous act? He took the full painful consequences of the evolutionary journey in which humans were, by necessity, emerged. He embraced the vulnerability of love, absorbed every pain that evil and human cruelty could muster, and he chose forgiveness. By this choice, he conquered the desires that in humans had been turned to evil. If humans were not in a muddle because of a sin in the Garden of Eden, they were still hopelessly bound to the strong impulses that overwhelmed their ability to turn pain and its consequent passions into love.

Jesus on the cross, to borrow an analogy from Paul Fiddes, became like the first man to scale a previously impassable mountain path. Once the terrain was traversed and conquered, Christ became the guide for all who would follow him. He made a way where there was none, and his Spirit continues that work today. Christians must now take up their cross and follow Jesus in the same path of sacrificial love.

From this evolutionary perspective, the ubiquity of pain in the world is not an argument against the love or goodness of God. Rather, it is the key to understanding our high calling of love. When we are in pain, more than any other moment, our passions are invoked and shaped. When our pain leads us to violence, hate, or revenge, our desires turn to evil. If instead, in the moment of pain, we choose to forgive, the power of pain is broken. It is not passed on in aggression or turned upon the self in shame. Forgiveness is the ultimate defeat of evil and freedom from it. While we may still be in pain, we may also find joy in the transformation of

love. There is redemption in finding that without retaliation we can relinquish the role of victim and become the victor. The pain of the transformation is correlated with the joy that comes with the new power of love and the possibility of healing, both for oneself and for the broken relationship.

The path of love is a longer, harder road than the simple one of survival called for by evolution. Think of a grain of wheat on an evolutionary path: it simply falls to the ground and dies. The grain chosen to be bread, however, has a much more arduous path. It must be cut, threshed, ground, kneaded, and placed in the fire before its final transformation. Love is the gift of divine grace in our life, but no path is harder than the path of true love. It "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:7). The love that will not bear pain is no love at all, and forgiveness where no pain has been suffered is not forgiveness.

It is not often that the study of biology leads to deep spiritual insight. But Elphinstone shows us how the evolutionary narrative works not against but with the Christian narrative of redemption. In light of evolution, the existence of violence and hatred in the world appears not as an insoluble theological riddle but the outcome of a long and necessary process that is still in development. The bitter raw products of evolution are slowly being brought to transcend evolution itself. We are, through the painful process of forgiveness, being transformed into the image and likeness of Christ. CC



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The story of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg

Mission in spite of empire

by Sarah Hinlicky Wilson

THE WORD *mission* leads a curious double life in mainline churches nowadays. On the one hand, it's on everyone's lips, a frequently frantic response to declining membership or a thinly veiled borrowing from the business world, the better to market our ecclesial product. On the other hand, it's almost an expletive, the wicked work of colonial toadies destroying indigenous cultures and imposing Western religion with guns and Coca-Cola. In either case, the word tends to have a high recognition factor while remaining nearly void of content. Neither version of mission spends a lot of time with the details of actual efforts to spread the gospel.

Into this self-referential circle of North American anxiety comes the gentle rebuke of the Tamils of India. Not only Tamil Christians, either. Tamil Hindus and Tamil Muslims happily join the chorus in singing the praises of one Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, the subject of Christopher Gilbert's documentary *Beyond Empires*, distributed by Lamp Post Media. An 18th-century German Lutheran Pietist whose missionary career lasted only 13 years before his untimely death, Ziegenbalg's unprecedented approach to the Great Commission caused him to become "the father of modern Protestant mission," in the words of Tamil church historian Daniel Jeyaraj.

Not that Gilbert, an Australian filmmaker, knew any of this at first. Like most 21st-century Protestants, even German or Lutheran ones, Gilbert had never heard the unwieldy name until a Tamil church planter in New York City tracked him down in 2006 (having seen a short film he'd made about Redeemer Presbyterian in Manhattan) and asked him to tell the story of Ziegenbalg in videographic fashion. To make matters even more difficult, at that time there was only one book in English about the man in question: *The First Protestant Missionary to India*, by Brijraj Singh. Not a theological but rather a sociological account of Ziegenbalg's impact on Tamil life and culture, the book exuded affection for its subject. And the author was a Hindu. Gilbert was intrigued.

As it turned out, 2006 was a bit late to get started on the film. It was actually the tercentenary year of Ziegenbalg's arrival on the shores of India, and local celebrations were well under way. Gilbert wasn't able to travel to Tranquebar himself, but he found a Muslim journalist to coordinate with a Hindu cameraman to shoot footage of the festivities. Both men asked Gilbert to call every morning and pray for their day's labors before they set out. It was only four years later that Gilbert was able to travel to India himself and set to work on telling the story of "the

Morningstar of India" who had inspired 10,000 Indians of all religious convictions to gather and commemorate him.

But who was this Ziegenbalg, and how did he, at the tender age of 23, initiate such a dramatic change in Christian missions?

One hundred years before the arrival of the British, Denmark had a trading colony on the southeast coast of India, rather self-importantly named Fort Dansborg but better known as Tranquebar. It was everything you'd expect of a colonial enterprise: abusive, exploitative, and reducing the local population to slavery. Accordingly, the church was carefully excluded. It was only when King Frederick IV's mistress died in labor with his own child that a momentary pang of conscience induced him to accede to the wishes of his wife, mother, and chaplain, and he authorized a mission in the colony.

Danish volunteers were not forthcoming. Church had been defined territorially, indeed statically: hard as it is to fathom now,

Ziegenbalg learned Tamil and changed Christian missions.

there was no theological framework for even imagining the onward movement of the apostolic gospel to new lands. It had been an assumed truth among Protestants that the task of the Great Commission had been laid only on the original apostles, or in any event had already been finished—forgetful, perhaps, of how recently Christianity had come to a number of European peoples. Some even considered mission to be a uniquely Catholic heresy.

The personnel for King Frederick's new mission were to be found instead in Halle, Germany, a center for Pietist renewal, open and eager to take the torch to new lands. Ziegenbalg was young, frail, and suffered from chronic illness; on the other hand, he was devoted, and all of his family members had died, leaving him free to forsake his own country forever in service of another. Together with his colleague Heinrich Plütschau, he set sail for India and arrived in 1706, a landing of such enormous historical impact that already in 1931 it was being reenacted on grainy black-and-white film, as shown in Gilbert's documentary.

Sarah Hinlicky Wilson is assistant research professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, and the editor of Lutheran Forum. Visit www.lamppostmedia.net/ziegenbalg/index.html for more information about the film Beyond Empires.



MISSION TO INDIA: (clockwise from top left) *The Danish trading colony Fort Dansborg, better known as Tranquebar; church historian Daniel Jeyaraj; actor Mark Stevick, portraying 18th-century missionary Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg in the film Beyond Empires.*

Ziegenbalg did not arrive the ideal missionary. Like all too many of his kind before and since, he assumed that the Tamils were uncivilized and required European enlightenment to become Christian, if not human. His fellow Europeans certainly thought so. What changed things for him, and quickly, was his mastery of the Tamil language: within six months he was reading, writing, and speaking it. He attended classes for children in order to learn, took up residence among the slaves in the Tamil quarter, and almost immediately began to see his mission objects in a new light, as subjects equally made in the image of God.

A more dramatic determination followed from this: Tamils ought not be required to adopt European ways of being Christian. Not only their own language, not only their own dress, but even their own religious traditions were legitimate.

Now credited with being “the first Indologist,” Ziegenbalg inaugurated the study of other religions among Christians and became the world’s first European expert on Hinduism. He began collecting Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts and studied the Bhakti spirituality within Hinduism that was dominant among the Tamils. His own Pietist Christianity shared resonances with the Bhakti tradition, and he encouraged the Tamils he met to reconsider to *whom* they offered their devotion but not necessarily *how* they did it. To be sure, he opposed practices he found to be at odds with the gospel, such as the *devadasi* women being consecrated to temple life or the burning of widows. But his respect and openness for indigenous spirituality was without precedent or peer.

In due course Ziegenbalg set about building a church for the community at Tranquebar. But the Danes didn’t want to share space with the despised locals, so Ziegenbalg had to build a second, the Jerusalem Church which stands to this day. Some years later he built a seminary for the training of indigenous leaders. He translated the whole of the New Testament into Tamil and saw to its printing, and was still working on the Old Testament when he died.

Akin to Luther’s codification of German through his own Bible translation, Ziegenbalg gave modern Tamil its form. At his time, there was a rather enormous gap between classical Tamil as found on the palm-leaf manuscripts and spoken Tamil—so Ziegenbalg adapted the old script to suit the modern form, and that is the script still in use in Tamil Nadu today. And once there was a written script, of course there needed to be places for people to learn it, so Ziegenbalg built schools for both boys and girls. Many stirring testimonies in the documentary cite Ziegenbalg as the origin of women’s liberation in India. To this he added orphanages and created employment for Tamils who’d been rejected by their families upon their conversion.

Actually, within Ziegenbalg’s own lifetime, the number of Tamil converts never amounted to more than 250. Despite this, he was met with virulent opposition by the local authorities and even fellow missionaries. The colonial governor harassed Ziegenbalg, confiscated his funds arriving from overseas, and once threw him in prison for four months of solitary confinement—though at other times he invited Ziegenbalg to dinner, lent him his horse, and donated bricks to the church. Perplexed by this hot-and-cold behavior, Ziegenbalg finally discovered after eight years that the governor had been under orders by the director of the Danish East India Company to destroy the mission’s work: the merchants knew all too well how deadly Tamil conversion would be for their greedy designs.

At this, Ziegenbalg undertook the dangerous sea voyage back home for a confrontation with king and company. In fact, the once-again conscience-stricken king had already found a new director for the DEIC, but the missionary was still lauded on his return home, regarded as a hero. He availed himself of the opportunity to marry as well, and Maria Dorothea Salzmann became an enthusiastic partner in his ministry.

Things were no better with the mission board. Some years



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before, two new missionaries had arrived, one by the name of Johann Ernst Gründler, who shared Ziegenbalg's view of things and held down the fort while Ziegenbalg returned to Denmark. The other missionary regarded Tamils as filthy animals. Luckily, the latter swiftly returned home, along with Ziegenbalg's original colleague Plütschau. Unfortunately, matters took a turn for the worse with the appointment of a radical Pietist named Christian Wendt to the mission board.

Convinced that Christianity should address the soul but ignore the body, Wendt's mission theory—untested by any actual experience—demanded a verbal preaching of the gospel and then moving on. Ziegenbalg's care for the health, education, and protection of his Tamils offended Wendt to the core, to which Ziegenbalg retorted that if the gospel caused Tamils to lose their livelihoods, then the gospel in turn demanded that he care for them. Undeterred, Wendt persecuted Ziegenbalg and assassinated his character at every opportunity. Before long the still-young man died after a six-month illness. Gründler followed him to the grave a year later, also under the stress of Wendt's persecution.

Despite its short duration, modest number of converts, and perpetual affliction, Ziegenbalg's ministry changed the entire trajectory of the Tamil people. As both contemporary Tamil scholar Daniel Jeyaraj and British missions scholar Andrew F. Walls affirm during interviews in the film,

Christianity is not the culture-destroying invasion so many assume it to be; again and again it has proven to be an active force in preserving cultures. Right in the face of aggressive empire, Ziegenbalg affirmed, protected, and promoted indigenous Tamil culture, for gospel reasons. At the same time, on account of the same gospel, he sought to remove and suppress those elements of the culture that opposed human dignity and flourishing.

After illustrating its point vividly with interviews, maps, old documents, period illustrations, and paintings, the film ends with a challenge to Western presuppositions: "The idea of missionaries as culture destroyers is so deeply held as an article of faith now, especially in the West, that it causes even people of good will to want to separate Ziegenbalg's work from his religious belief, as if somehow he did what he did in spite of his faith in Christ, and not because of it."

Negotiations are under way with the History Channel and PBS about broadcasting the film, and it will be aired by National Religious Broadcasters on October 2–3. DVDs are available at beyondempires.com.

The takeaway of *Beyond Empires* is stirring: sometimes the church has managed to do exactly what it was called to do. In Ziegenbalg we see the church faithful to Jesus Christ, open to the other, demanding justice, enacting mercy, and walking humbly with God and neighbor alike. May those many Germanic syllables quickly become a household name! **CC**



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Following Martin

by Richard Lischer

WHAT HAPPENED to the civil rights movement of the late 1950s and the 1960s? The question comes up among historians and interested observers who find it hard to trace a narrative line from the heady days of Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma through the cultural free-for-all that followed. What are the “assured results” of those sacrifices? Increasingly, the question is framed in the ever-expanding shadow of Martin Luther King Jr., whose persona has evolved from the wire-tapped radical of the 1960s to the treasured martyr whose memorial rests beside those of Jefferson, Lincoln, and FDR in the nation’s capital.

With his memorial and a national holiday in his honor, King takes his place in the nation’s book of founding fathers and heroes, his story interleaved with theirs. Most schoolchildren are familiar with his epochal achievements, including his many campaigns, the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, and the tragic circumstances of his martyrdom. But what is the after-story? Were the accomplishments of his generation only a dream? Or did they inaugurate a new and very different struggle for civil rights in America?

David Chappell takes on the question. Chappell, who teaches at the University of Oklahoma, is the author of an earlier book on King, the highly respected *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*. Chappell combines two remarkable strengths in a historian. First, he is an excellent storyteller with the ability to translate the personalities and political intrigues of another generation into narratives that still matter.

For example, when he reviews the stories of Coretta Scott King and Jesse Jackson, he manages to view them through a double lens. Up close, they are real people and not the caricatures with which we have become familiar. Of Coretta King he writes, “Her pieta-like irreproachability seemed to grow even as her husband’s flaws were exposed over the years. Nobody, after all, had borne those flaws—and the vulnerability they translated into—more directly or more intimately than she. . . . It would have shocked her husband to learn that his memory had become a political asset. But it was becoming a great one, and so quickly that she had little choice but to make his memory the center of her public career.”

The historian’s second lens is the high-angle shot. Chappell views his subjects as actors whose performances stimulate a response and actually *do* something on the political stage. With regard to Jesse Jackson, the author reminds us of the complex-

Waking from the Dream: The Struggle for Civil Rights in the Shadow of Martin Luther King, Jr.

By David L. Chappell
Random House, 272 pp., \$27.00

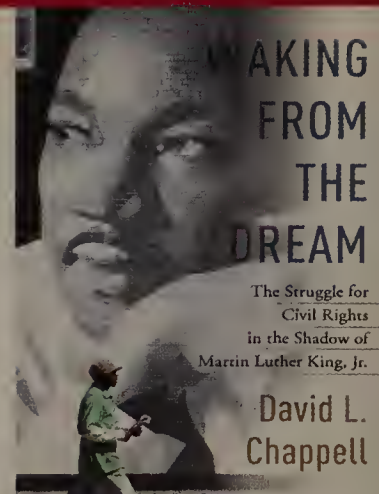
ity of the man, whose uncompromising assault on racism coexisted with an equally uncompromising opposition to abortion. Chappell skillfully portrays Jackson’s character flaws as well as his stunning political successes—in 1988 he won the Democratic primary in Michigan with 55 per cent of the vote, and ten other states as well. In four years his voter registration campaigns added 2 million new black voters to the rolls. His diplomatic achievements made headlines.

Chappell’s second strength lies in his attention to the backstory. It is painstaking. Some of the best reading is found in his voluminous endnotes. If the reader wishes to retrace the con-

Did the civil rights movement fracture without its charismatic leader?

trovery over Jesse Jackson’s self-aggrandizing posture immediately after King’s assassination, it is all there in the notes. (By the way, Chappell convincingly shows that Jackson’s blood-stained claim to have cradled the dying King in his arms was a myth, the result of a press rumor gone viral in its day.) If one has forgotten the political shenanigans that preceded the enactment of the King holiday, they are all here in this book, including the spectacle of Republican opponents caving to the new black demographic in America, leaving the racist Jesse Helms to twist slowly in the wind. Or, if one has forgotten liberals’ over-the-top denunciation of Ralph David Abernathy for telling secrets everybody already knew, Chappell provides the sad details.

The years that followed King’s assassination were, in Chappell’s words, “full of ferment and vital experimentation



Richard Lischer teaches at Duke Divinity School. He is the author of *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Word that Moved America*.

in civil rights.” That his book consists of a series of episodes only highlights the difficulty of identifying anything resembling a post-King narrative of civil rights in America. Of these episodes, which are significant and which are peripheral to the continuing story of civil rights? The most important of these is the Civil Rights Act of 1968, also known as the Fair Housing Act. The landmark laws of 1964 and 1965 were inspired by Birmingham and Selma, but they left residential segregation largely untouched. The power of real estate played, and continues to play, a huge role in restricting economic and educational opportunities. King’s death made it possible for the Johnson administration to push through legislation that eventually affected nearly 100 percent of housing transactions nationwide, and it did so with broad Republican cooperation. It was the last of King’s victories in America.

In the early 1970s black leaders were forced to come to terms with the absence of a charismatic leader. The trend away from King’s classic (and Christian) organization toward a variety of black nationalist strategies was already a fact of life in his final years; his death underscored the dilemma. The response came in efforts to build black institutions rather than anoint a black leader. The National Black Political Convention was held in 1972, and the Congressional Black Caucus was founded the year before. At the caucus’s founding

the actor Ossie Davis brought down the house with, “It’s not the rap, it’s the map; it’s not the man, it’s the plan.” The result was the emergence of not one but a cadre of gifted black politicians, such as Richard Hatcher, Carl Stokes, Coleman Young, Maynard Jackson, Tom Bradley, and Shirley Chisholm, whose allegiance to established political parties effectively distanced them from more incendiary options. Black political conventions attracted participants in unprecedented numbers—accompanied by the predictable conflicts and fractures, leading

The Fair Housing Act was the last of King’s victories.

Chappell to conclude, “The quest that animated the conventions yielded no tangible new achievements, no new map or plan.”

Chappell then turns to the personalities who, either self-consciously or unintentionally, assumed prominence in the years after King. These included Ralph Abernathy, Jesse Jackson, and Coretta Scott King. In contrast to the men, Coretta King’s style of leadership was often restrained and veiled; yet in the steadfastness with which she pursued a legal holiday for her husband it proved no less effective than Jackson’s more spectacular methods.

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The later chapters in *Waking from the Dream* reflect fewer legislative initiatives and more affective expressions of King's influence on American life. The book roughly covers the years 1968–1990; in those years King's legacy was chiefly symbolized by the establishment of the Martin Luther King holiday. Chappell's account stops with the political maneuvers that made it possible. One would like to hear more about the aftermath of the holiday and the many ways, great and small, in

King's message spawned a wide variety of civil rights movements.

which remembering Martin Luther King has fostered a spirit of service and subtly refigured the texture of American life. But one book can't do everything.

It's more difficult to trace a meaningful connection between the end of the King era and the oft-told stories of King's extramarital affairs and his plagiarism, which Chappell treats in some detail. While they created hotspots of media attention, they failed to cancel out the courage, tenacity, eloquence, selflessness, and other virtues that helped make the movement possible. How the scandals affected King's reception by the

public or bore any influence on subsequent struggles for civil rights seems impossible to document. One can only hazard an educated guess that rumors of King's personal failings created an excuse for conservative Christian groups to withhold their blessing. Chappell reaches no conclusion other than to note that King's standing as "one of the greatest idealists of all time" remains undiminished.

If one is looking for an omission in this survey of the post-King years, it is the deafening silence of the religious voice. In Chappell's history of 1968–1990, the importance of religion does not come up on a single page. This is surprising since Chappell's earlier book portrayed King and his opponents in theological terms. And it is even more surprising when one remembers that King consistently presented himself and his movement in extravagantly Christian imagery. In Memphis the night before he died, he interpreted his mission through the lens of the Good Samaritan and Moses on Mount Nebo. On a scale unprecedented in American history, King transported the Judeo-Christian themes of suffering, redemption, justice, and hope from the safety of the canopied pulpit into the streets and cities of the nation. He dreamed a social revolution in the mirror of the Bible and the gospel.

Thus it does not seem unreasonable to ask if there is a story to be told of religion "after King." If so, it would certainly proceed in fits and starts, in disjunction from King's magisterial

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synthesis of Protestant liberalism and black church religion. It would tell of the growing militancy among black Christian leaders who grew weary of the theology of nonviolence and distrustful of the preachers who delivered it.


Later, that distrust would focus on the *men* who assumed ownership of the revolution. Other questions come up: In the Me Decades of the 1970s and '80s, was it a reaction to King's social gospel that helped fuel the charismatic movement, therapeutic religion, and the quest for self-realization? What are we to make of the resurgence of evangelicalism and its current embrace of Martin Luther King as a soul mate? And in the academy, how are we to understand black religion's move away from the black church?

In ever-shifting scenarios, the story of King's dream persisted beyond the life of the dreamer. As Chappell says, King began a work that "brought masses together in political and economic action to alleviate large-scale injustice and human suffering." In fact, it inspired so many lines of growth they could not be contained in a single narrative or a single book. In the last year of his life, King's message found a new hearing in the antiwar movement. It was succeeded by the Poor People's Campaign, the women's movement, the farmworkers' struggle, environmental activism, gay and lesbian liberation, and other quests for freedom. In content and method, none of these initiatives replicated the civil rights movement of 1955–1968. But in spirit they all borrowed a burning coal or

two from King's synthesis of prophetic critique and prophetic hope.

Internationally, the same spirit brooded over other freedom movements. They sang "We Shall Overcome" in Leipzig, East Berlin, Prague, Tiananmen Square, Soweto Township, and countless other cities and towns. In these places they did not so much wake from the dream as embrace it and make it their own.

Today, numerical gains in black elected officials, already evident in the late 1960s, have overlapped the realms of business, academia, and the professions beyond anything King could have imagined. The losses, too, among the urban poor, the young, and the very old would have surpassed his powers of imagination. The realities of friendship and cooperation among the races can be seen in every neighborhood, community, and school. They are balanced out, but not canceled out, by harsh economic numbers, entrenched patterns of segregation, and violent eruptions of race hate in America.

Like a good historian, Chappell eschews a grand summation of all he has mined from the two and a half decades after King's death. Congressman John Lewis is less reserved. On what would have been King's 80th birthday, Lewis told a visitor to his Capitol Hill office, "Barack Obama is what comes at the end of that bridge in Selma." That is matter for another book. In the meantime, we have Chappell's carefully wrought study of a nation's fitful waking from a beautiful dream. It seems to ask, Were we ever ready for a dream that big? 

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Faith MATTERS

by M. Craig Barnes

Joyful to the end

STEVE HAYNER is the president of Columbia Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. He's also a husband, father, grandfather, and close friend from whom I have mostly lived too far away. It now appears that he doesn't have long to live.

We met over 25 years ago when he served as the president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and I was starting my first pastorate at a nearby congregation in Madison, Wisconsin. For the next five years our families met every Sunday night along with two other couples also in ministry. Perched on a sofa and some chairs borrowed from a dining room, we always went around the circle to check in with each other. I've wracked my brain to pull up those conversations, but what I remember is that I enjoyed being in a place where I wasn't the pastor. This was when sabbath began for me, as I rested in the sanctuary of dear friends.

Over the years Steve and I have done the best we could at showing up for each other's big events. I officiated at his daughter's wedding. He was front and center when I was installed as a seminary president last year. He's about ten years older than I am and was always a lap or two ahead of me in our careers. So I called him from time to time to get advice. Last February we joined three other seminary presidents in a van that rambled around the West Bank looking for ways to be of service.

It was on Easter, ironically, that Steve began to feel ill. He went to the doctor and was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He threw himself into an aggressive chemo treatment. But recently he wrote that the duration of his life on earth is a matter of weeks or months. He's lost a tremendous amount of weight.

Columbia Seminary has been fabulous in caring for its president. The Caringbridge website that Steve and his wife Sharol use to keep friends informed about his condition has been filled with affirming and prayerful responses. I follow this regularly but was knocked out the day the Hayners sent out a photo of themselves on a sofa with five grandchildren on their laps—everyone is laughing. As long as I've known Steve he's signed his letters with the word *joyfully* before his name. Nothing's changed about that: he believes that in life and death we belong to God.

In his latest e-mail he wrote, "Both grief and joy knock us about like outsized ocean waves. The waves take us by surprise but also remind us of what it means to be human—and pursued by grace."

Someone asked him how he was planning to spend the

months ahead. Several people have suggested that he write a book; they have lots of opinions on what he should write about. He wrote, "Honestly, there is not much joy for me in writing." Instead he's decided to focus the energy he has on a "daily calling." He wants to assist in the remodeling of the house where Sharol will live. He wants to be intentional about how he gives away his library, and, as is clear from the photograph, he wants to laugh with his grandchildren.

Sharol sometimes also writes posts in which she thanks people for their prayers. In a recent one she wrote, "Last Sunday night our five-year-old granddaughter Anna asked her mom and dad when she might get her regular grandpa back. This led to a conversation with Anna and seven-year-old Claire about Papa's prognosis and the new body that Jesus would give him in heaven. Anna said, 'I wish I knew if Jesus was going to heal him here or in heaven. But I know that Jesus keeps his promises. We can trust him.'"

Faith is not about understanding but about trust.

Well, there it is. When I think about all that Steve Hayner still has to offer the kingdom of God, I go a little crazy trying to figure out why Jesus has to wait until heaven to heal him. Why not here and now? He's done it before. And what about all of the prayers that have bombarded heaven's door? But a central part of our faith is the almost daily reminder that we are not Jesus and aren't even called to understand him. The call is just to "trust him," as Anna reminds us. So it has always been in the history of the church in prayer.

When I read Anna's words it was almost as if I was back in Madison over 25 years ago with my old friends in ministry. One of us would describe a mission that was going down in flames. We would protest that we had offered so many prayers about it. "Jesus shouldn't have to wait for heaven to heal the church," we would say. And at the end of the dark night Steve would say something prophetic about choosing to live joyfully.

It is breathtaking to watch people prepare to die as they lived. This is what gives credibility to a church that teaches its grandchildren that when it comes to Jesus "we can trust him."

M. Craig Barnes is president of Princeton Theological Seminary.

IN Review

With malice toward Lincoln

by Paul Harvey

One year after Lincoln was assassinated by the pioneering Lincoln loather John Wilkes Booth, an ex-Confederate Texas fighter made this toast to his fellow former fighters: “Here is to the man that pulled the *Trigger* / That killed the man that freed the *Nigger*.”

In the early 20th century, the historian-general of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Mildred Lewis Rutherford, and the president of the College of William and Mary, Lyon Gardiner Tyler, led the charge against what Tyler called “Lincolnolatry.” Rutherford exalted the sainted memory of Confederate president Jefferson Davis in comparison with the deceitful tyrant Lincoln and led a relentless campaign to purge school textbooks of any suggestion that the rise of the Confederacy might somehow have been tied to slavery. She was possibly the most effective guardian of political correctness in schoolbooks in American history—at least until recently when certain Texans decided to become arbiters of what children should learn about history, science, and other fields of study.

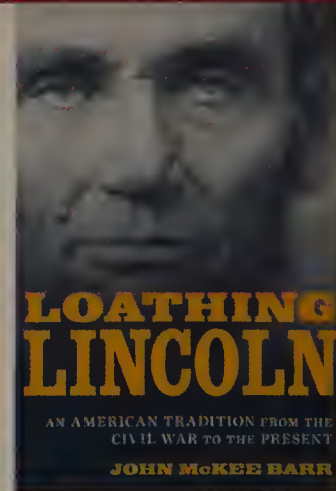
Meanwhile, Tyler portrayed Lincoln as both magically tyrannical and a “pitiful failure” who “sat around juggling with words and doing nothing.” That is, Lincoln somehow managed to centralize government and wield all power in his hands and yet was too incompetent to run an army (unlike George B. McClellan, a wonderful general in Tyler’s estimation). Writers to publications such as the *Confederate Veteran*, and later the famous “southern agrarians” (or “Fugitives”) of the 1930s, depicted Lincoln as the great “centralizer” and the progenitor of federal despotism, making arguments that showed how much they identified Lincoln with Woodrow Wilson.

Nearly 150 years later, Fox News commentator Andrew Napolitano, former member of the New Jersey Superior Court, condemned Abraham Lincoln as a “racial supremacist” in his tirade *The Constitution in Exile*. Napolitano’s absurd assertions were recently voted off the island by a panel of historians (including Eric Foner and his student Manisha Sinha) who appeared with him on the *Daily Show*. But that view keeps getting aired at Fox News.

Libertarians have been furiously debating Lincoln’s legacy since World War II. Thomas DiLorenzo’s *The Real Lincoln* presents the brief for the prosecution, while the conservative political philosopher Harry Jaffa and outstanding conservative historian Allen Guelzo lead the defense. In the world of academia, the well-researched views and thoughtful analysis of Guelzo and numerous others have long since prevailed, but in the realm of popular belief and political polemics, figures such as Ron Paul, his son Rand, and others from the libertarian right have taken DiLorenzo’s assertions about Lincoln’s tyranny and the alleged real meaning of the Civil War to vast audiences.

Little wonder, then, that a recent poll showed that most Americans under age 30 think that the main cause of the Civil War was a dispute over states’ rights. The views of Rutherford, Tyler, and the Texas ex-Confederate live on, like Banquo’s ghost, even though there is an abundance of well-documented refutations from the best scholarly conservative and libertarian thinkers.

John McKee Barr has constructed a detailed, deeply analytical, and persuasively argued narrative that connects these instances of Lincoln loathing. He



Loathing Lincoln: An American Tradition from the Civil War to the Present

By John McKee Barr
Louisiana State University Press,
480 pp., \$35.95

makes it clear that although Lost Causers, neo-Confederates, and the libertarian right have dominated the literature of Lincoln loathing, the liberal left has also contributed on occasion. Barr cites critical essays on Lincoln by anti-imperialists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, by W. E. B. Du Bois and others on the black radical left, and most extensively by Lerone Bennett Jr. The latter blasted Lincoln—in words far harsher than Frederick Douglass’s—for the president’s postwar statements in defense of white supremacy and black colonization. And as in the case of abolitionist Lysander Spooner, one criticism from the left was that emancipation emerged accidentally, as a war measure, and that Lincoln’s heart was never fully invested in the cause of racial equality.

The best scholarship on Lincoln and the Republicans—most recently Eric Foner’s Pulitzer Prize-winning biography and James Oakes’s commendation of Civil War-era Republicans for their commitment to addressing issues of racial justice—has mostly exonerated Lincoln from these charges. Particularly important is Foner’s insistence that we examine Lincoln’s growth and change

Paul Harvey teaches history at the University of Colorado, runs the blog Religion in American History (usreligion.blogspot.com), and is the author of Moses, Jesus, and the Trickster in the Evangelical South (University of Georgia Press).

over time, especially his remarkable advance from some embarrassing statements on race as late as the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates to his endorsement of at least limited black suffrage toward the end of the Civil War.

The liberal left has never loathed Lincoln; critics from this perspective simply point out his shortcomings much as abolitionists of Lincoln's own era frequently did. As Barr makes clear in his conclusion:

The struggle over Lincoln's image has always been rooted in contesting visions of America, one envisioning freedom and equality for all, the other envisioning freedom and equality for some, with subordination to authority, or their so-called natural superiors, for the rest. . . . Abraham Lincoln's enemies have always tried to define who he was, but in their loathing for the president, they more often than not defined themselves.

In the process of tracing the arguments of the Lincoln loathers, particularly those from the neo-Confederate and libertarian right, Barr also patiently takes apart those arguments, making this a book in which objectivity is not a false neutrality. All the worse, then, that in 2010 the Texas Board of Education began requiring students to study the inaugural addresses of both Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, not so students will understand them as historians would, but to pose yet another false equivalency. As Barr writes, it's one thing to study the documents of the past in order to understand the past, but it's "another thing entirely if Davis and the cause he advocated—the perpetuation of inhuman bondage—is characterized instead as resistance to centralized government in the name of states' rights" and then "placed on the same moral plane" as Lincoln's wish to end slavery. Barr's work fairly summarizes the views of the Lincoln loathers and also devastates them.

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Questions for Christians: The Surprising Truths Behind Basic Beliefs

By John Morreall

Rowman & Littlefield, 280 pp., \$34.00

Blind acceptance of received religious beliefs and practices leaves one a spiritual infant. Although many people are comfortable living in that state, it's not spiritually healthy to do so. The risks involved in questioning one's beliefs and practices are worth taking. To borrow from Anselm, we are well served when faith pursues understanding.

John Morreall, a professor of religious studies at the College of William and Mary, wants Christians to ask questions of their beliefs and practices, following

the example of Peter Abelard, who put theological statements to the test in *Sic et Non*. He envisions his book *Questions for Christians* as a modern rendition of Abelard's work. Even though Morreall insists that Jesus did not teach doctrines, but rather offered his followers a way of life, in this book he focuses his attention on the rationality of Christian doctrines and beliefs.

Morreall examines nearly every facet of Christian belief, from the authority and interpretation of scripture to the nature of the church, with chapters examining Christology, the Trinity, the nature of God, the afterlife, and even the existence of angels and demons and whether angels have wings and demons have horns. He checks these varied beliefs against what he believes are the central teachings and practices of Jesus.

To this end Morreall presents ten tenets, beginning with the love ethic, to which he refers throughout the book. If you practice the love ethic, he says, you put "your time and energy into helping

people, and trust in God to provide your daily needs." The remaining tenets relate to the family of God, equality, economics, leadership, festivity, legalism, divine judgment, forgiveness, and pacifism.

Morreall bemoans the influence of Greek philosophy on Christianity and later Constantine's embrace of the faith, arguing that these two developments moved the church away from the primitive purity of Jesus' message. With Constantine came councils and creeds, the ascendance of trinitarianism, and a doctrinal system that Morreall finds problematic. There is some truth in his account of the effects of merging church and state, but in his desire to cast doctrinal developments such as the Trinity in a negative light, Morreall links them too closely to the interests of the state.

The intent of the author is commendable. Our belief systems should be marked by clarity, coherence, and credibility, as well as by mystery and humility. However, Morreall's argument is flawed. What he offers is a liberal version of fun-



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damentalism. The manner of his presentation lacks nuance. In many places he falls victim to the same tendencies for which he criticizes conservatives. Too often he offers an either/or choice: if the ransom theory of the atonement is true, then Anselm's satisfaction theory must be false. This despite the fact that the biblical materials invite a variety of interpretations of the meaning of the cross.

Morreall accuses the Gospel writers of not being "careful, logical thinkers" because they applied the term *messiah* to Jesus in a way that was out of line with traditional uses of the word. Why this makes them less than careful in their thinking is not clear. He displays similar narrowness when he discusses formulations of the Trinity by fourth-century theologians such as Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa, accusing them of constructing "poorly thought-out theories that were then mistranslated several times, until the result was our incoherent English phrase 'God is three persons in one substance.'" The fact that in the modern era theologians from Barth to Moltmann have continued to work with these categories seems to belie the idea that those earlier theologians' theories were "poorly thought-out."

Then there's Morreall's use of caricature, as when he gives the impression that conservative thinkers are less than educated. At one point he mentions Billy Graham and Joel Osteen, notes that neither went to seminary, and then writes that "such preachers present their own positions as obviously correct and treat historical and critical discussion as unnecessary."

In a book that seems to be targeting a general audience, Morreall covers too many topics and does so in a way that will create more walls than bridges. His vision is narrow, his tone is judgmental, and his historical and theological work is often sloppy. The premise is sound, but other books will do a better job of accomplishing the task at hand.

Reviewed by Robert D. Cornwall, pastor of Central Woodward Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Troy, Michigan, and editor of Sharing the Practice, the journal of the Academy of Parish Clergy.

The New Arabs: How the Millennial Generation Is Changing the Middle East

By Juan Cole
Simon & Schuster, 368 pp., \$26.00

January 2011. "Mubarak next," said one of our church security guards when news reached us that autocrat Ben Ali had fled Tunisia for safety in Saudi Arabia. The guard was only half joking. I had been working in Egypt for eight years by that time, serving as the rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in the southern part of Cairo.

The week the revolution began in Egypt I started monitoring the Facebook site "We are all Khaled Said," dedicated to a young Egyptian man arrested for no apparent reason and brutally murdered by police the previous summer. Under emergency law in Egypt this could happen to anyone. A few days after the first Tahrir Square protest, I came out of our Friday

morning worship service to find my cell phone texting and Internet connection disabled. The government had severed communications countrywide, hoping to prevent the spread of revolutionary crowds. Instead more people flooded into the streets; momentum was building.

Downtown, violence escalated as riot police subdued peaceful protesters with tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets. Later an Egyptian friend told me he had helped carry off nine people killed that day, one shot in the head by a sniper just yards away from him while he stood his ground, expecting to die as bullets sprayed round his feet.

The next morning I drove to church to check on things there. A burned-out police truck and several army tanks had

Reviewed by Paul-Gordon Chandler, founder and president of an interfaith arts nonprofit called CARAVAN, former rector of St. John's Episcopal Church-Maadi in Cairo, and author of Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road: Exploring a New Path between Two Faiths.



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From the Foreword, The Rt. Rev. Jeffrey Lee, Bishop of Chicago



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taken the place of the riot police. Our usual 24/7 crew of armed and plainclothes police had shrunk to just one man. He greeted me apprehensively, handed over his set of keys to the church property, and said goodbye. I never saw him again.

Several days later I spoke briefly with a Muslim man who lived in the old Christian section of Cairo. Learning that I worked with a church, he proudly told me that he and his neighbors were protecting the churches there from looters, knowing that many Coptic churches contained gold and silver from ancient times. Throughout the revolution many Christians and Muslims stood side by side despite counterrevolution thugs' attempts to fuel religious discord. A symbolic painting of a cross and crescent embracing soon decorated a brick wall near our home.

In *The New Arabs*, renowned blogger and Middle East expert Juan Cole tells the backstory of these fluid events in Egypt, accessibly exploring them in the context of

their cultural setting. His conclusions are optimistic yet grounded in realism. When he studied in Cairo as a young adult, Cole learned Arabic, and in the years since he has developed relationships with networked movements of young people over countless cups of sugared tea. He discusses a variety of underlying reasons for Middle Eastern revolutions—one being the youth bulge in population, which has created Depression-era rates of unemployment among educated and uneducated people alike and led to idleness and despair at a bleak future for young people between the ages of 15 and 35. Cole voices their frustrations, political aspirations, divergent opinions, and dreams and relates how they rejected censorship and risked arrest, police brutality, and torture. He narrates these stories in historical context, filling in the details with information gleaned from embassy reports, Wikileaks, books, journals, and myriad news sources.

Cole does not group all young Arabs

into a single all-encompassing generalization, although he primarily considers left-liberal youth living in towns and cities who share a preference for horizontal models of organization rather than a hierarchy of centralized leadership. "In societies dominated by police states for decades," he writes, "these millennials made new social and media spaces in which their demands could be voiced and small steps could be taken toward achieving them."

Whereas earlier generations may have refused to engage with certain kinds of groups, these youth are wired into interactive networks with horizontal organization that take an inclusive rather than a sectarian approach. Whereas their parents may see information consumption as a private or individual pursuit, these youth thrive on interactive group experiences via Internet forums, chat rooms, and blogging. Anonymity has provided an especially valuable vehicle for the emergence of young Arab women's voices. Information is also disseminated via street chants, word of mouth, and announcements from mosque minarets. In Egypt the stage was set for revolution.

Cole focuses on Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya in this book because their stories share many similarities: each country saw the deposing of an autocrat whose power otherwise would probably have been passed down to another family member. But he takes time to discuss other countries in the region as well. Although their stories remain in motion, Cole argues for an optimistic long-term vision in which the youth who have spoken recently will be heard from again when they have more opportunities to shape politics directly. He sums things up adeptly in his book's last line: "There will be no more republican monarchies. This generation of New Arabs has shaken a complacent, stagnant, and corrupt status quo and forever changed the world."

It is too soon to pronounce judgment on any emerging development in the Middle East. Our own country also struggled through periods of violence and despair after it had produced a supposedly just Constitution on paper. In Egypt torture continues even though it is now forbidden on paper, but small steps are being made toward recognizing the rights of women and children. A verbally de-



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clared all-inclusive Egypt seems to be embracing Christian and Muslim alike, but it restricts freedom of the press and shows no tolerance for the Muslim Brotherhood and for those aligned with Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi, who unfortunately led too autocratically. It is a complicated scene, and Cole doesn't brush over the complications.

Cole observes that Arab youth tend to be leaning toward a more secular or liber-

al definition of Islamic faith in their lives and that they tend to define themselves nationally, politically, and culturally rather than religiously. His admiration for these youth is evident. He credits them for kicking off a long intergenerational argument and for laying down markers for the future of the region, though setbacks as well as advances are to be expected as the years unfold. As Cole points out, revolution is sudden, but reform takes time.

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Simply Merton: Wisdom from His Journals

By Linus Mundy

Franciscan Media, 144 pp., \$14.99 paperback

Thomas Merton poured out his restless, searching, and wondering soul in his journals, which add up to more than a million words. Another monk once asked him why he wrote *everything* down. "If you don't, it is lost," Merton replied. Mundy organizes Merton's reflections according to 15 different themes, such as simplicity, becoming one's true self, non-violence, prayer and contemplation, and silence and solitude. There was a time when some of Merton's journals were restricted, but now they are all available. He must have sensed that someday people would be interested in reading his journals; in fact, some were published during his lifetime. Yet in these writings the reader discovers a transparency rare among religious writers. One Merton quote must suffice: "The spiritual life is something that people worry about when they are so busy with something else they think they ought to be doing."

The Quotable Kierkegaard

Edited by Gordon Marino

Princeton University Press, 304 pp., \$24.95

Marino, professor of philosophy and director of the Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College and avocational pugilist, has done a great service to neophyte and seasoned Kierkegaard scholars with this compendium of the wit and wisdom of the Danish philosopher often dubbed the father of existentialism. Just as valuable as the quotes are Marino's introduction to Kierkegaard's thought and account of his life. Marino came from a troubled background and found that boxing provided an outlet for his anger. He writes that "Kierkegaard helped me get through the suffering, helped me make sense of suffering." The final chapters include quotations on Christian themes.

Experiments in time

Even if you haven't seen *Boyhood*, you've probably heard of it. Richard Linklater's movie has received a lot of attention because of its unique structure: he filmed it by following his actors—the central one, a child—for a few days each year for 12 years. The premise is simple: a child grows up. The result is a startling realism.

The camera follows Mason (Ellar Coltrane) from ages six to 18 through all the graces and trials of a white, middle-class American life. Other films have dealt with coming of age, child-parent relationships, even with the passage of time. But no other film has taken the time—literally—to record time's passage in every frame.

In one scene Mason talks to his father about girls. His face is softened by the last traces of baby fat. In the next scene he strips off his shirt to reveal the lean, lanky outline of early adolescence. Whatever Linklater is saying about his characters is said in small, sometimes subtle transformations. We see how tenuous and yet unrelenting the process of growing up is. There are no big speeches or heavy-handed themes in the film—just the unfolding of a particular life in a particular body, a particular story. Linklater breaks new ground because he and his actors commit themselves to telling this story by writing the script as they go from year to year.

Linklater is no stranger to experiments in time. He made three films exploring the perils and mysteries of modern love—*Before Sunrise*, *Before Sunset*, and *Before Midnight*—over a period of nearly 20 years and used the same actors as the lovers in each film. When Céline (Julie Delpy) asks Jesse (Ethan Hawke) if he would still talk to

her if he met her as a stranger on a train (as he did 18 years earlier), there is no Hollywood gloss on the screen. Anyone who has aged alongside another human cannot help feeling the accumulated weight of their life together, visible in their rounded bodies and lined faces.

These movies don't feel like gimmicks; rather, they jar us with the reality of how seldom Hollywood entertainment captures all of human life. We know Hollywood fantasy—what real human life can compete with an actor or actress's witty dialogue, perfect apartment, sculpted abs, and luxurious hair? But as we ride with the ebb and flow of *Boyhood* or remember Linklater's earlier work, we begin to suspect that the real missing ingredient in most flimsy TV dramas and romances is time.

When theologians describe the human person in relationship to God, one of the first characteristics that must be named is *finite*. We are time-bound creatures. Time—its passing and our eventual end—is our natural habitat, the condition that makes possible everything else that we know to be true about human experience. The delight and power of *Boyhood* is not the perimeters of its story as much as the immersion into it: every story is a story about time.

It's unfair to imagine that all directors will begin filming their movies in real time, but there may be other places to experience this time-full truth in popular media consumption. As a parent of two young children, I often choose TV for entertainment because I can enjoy it in short snatches. But like many others these days, I often binge-watch episode after episode of one drama on DVD or streaming services. Sometimes I even save up



COMING OF AGE: *Boyhood*, filmed over the course of 12 years, documents the passage of time in one boy's life.

episodes for several weeks so that I can indulge. When I do this, I'm hoping to "get lost" in the passage of time.

There are a few shows that I watch weekly, and there an experiment in time is unfolding as well. When *Mad Men* returned for the first half of its final season in mid-April, I settled into its fictional world like the embrace of an old friend. I moved to New York, had a baby, finished graduate school, and started a job—all in parallel to the lives of *Mad Men* characters. I could trace the seasons of my life in Don Draper's aging face. When a season ends I take comfort in knowing that there's more to come (for now).

On one hand, I don't want to put too much moral weight on the timing of a TV schedule. On the other hand, the content of what we watch is only one part of the story. The power of the visual story medium is its ability to take us out of time—think of the two-hour hiatus from everyday life in a movie theater—and to give time back to us afterward. It's worth reflecting on how we watch, as well as what we watch. For me, that might mean that time-full viewing could be a spiritual discipline—or at least a greater awareness of my finitude in the stories that accompany me.

The author is Kathryn Reklis, who teaches theology at Fordham University.

Priest under threat

Father James Lavelle (Brendan Gleeson) is a faithful, genial priest living in what initially looks like an idyllic corner of western Ireland. In the confessional, he hears a man report being savagely abused by a priest throughout his childhood. As revenge, the man has determined to kill Father James, not because of any suspicion that he is a molester himself but solely because he is a priest. He will carry out his threat on a Sunday in two weeks' time. Father James knows the identity of his potential murderer, but the audience does not—nor will he share the name with any of his neighbors.

Thus begins *Calvary*, an extraordinarily fine Irish film, beautifully acted by some of that country's finest performers, and visually stunning. It is a masterpiece of religious filmmaking, exploring such critical concepts as collective sin, vicarious guilt, and sacrificial death. The film offers a wide-ranging study of the catastrophic effects of religious scandal on believers.

The weakest part of the film is the element of whodunit, or rather who is

about to do it. If you have any familiarity with cinema, you know that big-name actors who appear in films always have at least one major set piece. If such an actor has not had such a scene in the course of the film, then he is being saved for a denouement, and so it proves in this case.

That is, however, a tiny criticism of the film and its overall power. *Calvary*'s greatest achievement is to convey the impact of the near-collapse of faith in a specific community. Initially, we see Father James giving communion to his neighbors or mildly remonstrating with them for missing church, as if church-going was the absolute social norm it has always been in Catholic rural Ireland.

Soon, though, these encounters with parishioners turn ever darker. Everyone he meets, it seems, makes remarks deeply critical not just of the Catholic Church but of Christianity, and of religion itself.

The author is Philip Jenkins, who recently wrote The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade.



DARK TALE: Father James (Brendan Gleeson) is a good Irish priest beset by his parishioners, one of whom plans to kill him.

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These challenges range from mildly tasteless jokes to screaming rants, and ultimately of physical confrontation. All his parishioners have apparently accepted the most pernicious forms of anti-clericalism and anti-Catholicism. When an arsonist strikes the church, locals view the crime with a mixture of indifference and glee. As James is taunted, "Your time has gone, and you don't even realize it!" The film's sole faithful lay Catholic is a visiting European tourist.

The parish's once-faithful have a sweeping repertoire of complaints. They denounce the church for greed and cynicism, for sexual hypocrisy, for the racism of missions, for collaboration with the Nazis. They mock the concept of confession and forgiveness, which seems to give sinners easy license to repeat their misdeeds at will. Some scoff at the idea of a God who could permit the world's horror and injustices.

Looming over all these grievances is the clergy abuse scandal that has devas-

tated Irish Catholicism over the past 20 years. Although the issues at stake will be broadly familiar to Americans, the Irish manifestation of the story was much more severe. Church authorities were much slower to realize the harm caused by molestation than were their counterparts in the United States, permitting offending priests to carry on their criminal careers for far longer. Church leaders were also much more cozily tied to secular government, to police and politicians.

Aggravating the situation, Ireland's Catholic Church was not just one powerful part of a broad denominational spectrum, as in the United States, but instead held a near-monopoly of the religious marketplace. For many, the sins of the church thus discredited Christianity as a whole, rather than one part of it. A major survey of Irish opinion in 2011 found 44 percent of respondents declaring themselves nonreligious, with a further 10 percent claiming the atheist label. That's the

essential real-world background from which *Calvary* grows. The film's characters speculate whether their grandchildren will express astonishment that their ancestors ever believed in this silly God idea.

The abuse scandal resonates throughout *Calvary*. For all the seething hatred and suppressed violence that Father James must deal with, the film's ugliest single moment exposes him directly to the scandal's impact. Walking on a quiet road, he enters into a friendly chat with a passing young girl. Her panicked father drives up suddenly and orders the priest to stay away from the child he is perceived as clearly about to molest. Why else would a Catholic priest have anything to do with a child? That experience above all brings James to the point of despair.

But if the church is discredited, secular society is presented as a moral disaster area. Father James's village looks like an exemplar from a particularly lurid hellfire sermon. It is rife with drug use, violence, and casual adultery, all intended to mask the underlying despair and emptiness, the pervasive self-hatred. However much the inhabitants condemn the misdeeds of the church, the causes for this dreadful situation clearly lie elsewhere, mainly in the aftereffects of the economic crisis that overwhelmed Ireland in 2008 and which still has not been entirely resolved. One of the film's characters is a financial wizard who had helped cause that national meltdown and who explicitly proclaims the resulting moral chaos, the utter lack of meaning.

This is a world that has lost God. It is crying out for meaning, for faith, for a passionately presented Christian message. The ghastly obstacle to that is of course the church's own crisis. Perhaps that dilemma can only be resolved by the sacrifice of an innocent man, through the blood of a priest like Father James, who goes to meet his Calvary. An enigmatic final scene hints at the possibility of reconciliation, of beginning the lengthy process of reconstruction.

In some ways difficult to watch because of its very grim subject matter, *Calvary* is a wonderfully ambitious and provocative film. It demands frequent viewing and discussion.

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by Carol Howard Merritt

CHURCH in the MAKING

Walking into the sanctuary of Nashville's Downtown Presbyterian Church reminded me of a revival. The word *revival* has been used in many different ways in our religious history. Usually it refers to a preacher with great oratory skills who sweeps into town gathering thousands and transforming them with emotional pleas for personal repentance and ongoing dedication.

Downtown Presbyterian stokes a different sort of revival. I'd read about its unique place in architectural history. After two structures were destroyed by fire, William Strickland designed a building with the Egyptian Revival movement in mind. The year was 1848, and archaeological findings had kindled the imaginations of architects and furniture designers in Europe and the United States. The members of Downtown Presbyterian know that they are stewards of this movement and have preserved the church's art and windows.

As I approached the church, I was struck by the seeming incongruity of a traditional building embellished with bold chevron stripes and the illusion of a portico extending beyond the columns. Murals covered the walls, and I tried to decipher the symbolism of orbs with snakelike creatures descending from them. They reminded me of health textbook renderings of ovaries or of a nod to Ra. My eyes moved to the stained glass, where

palm trees swayed over tinted circles.

Although the building is striking, the church members don't see themselves only as preservationists maintaining the revivals of the past. Instead they have harnessed that past creative energy for a present awakening by feeding the homeless, providing art classes for children, and maintaining an artist-in-residence program. This sort of revival forms sustainable movements of inspiration. Entire city blocks come alive with artistry.

As I followed artist-in-residence Cary Gibson up a circling staircase, she warned me about the unevenness of the ancient steps. The winding walls were painted a dark hue, but the paint failed to mask the decades of fingerprints left by people holding themselves steady as they ascended.

The circuitous route reminded me of Gibson's journey. Her Scottish parents raised her in England, then she spent 24 years living in Ireland. There she earned master's degrees in peace studies and women's studies, which makes her a keen observer of power dynamics. She became a collaborator in Ikon Belfast, a community that thrives on the edge of religion, employing visual and performance art in its gatherings. Gibson's longing for

social justice spilled out in her energy, conversation, and collage work. As we talked we moved from global issues to southern racial history to local political minutiae.

At the top of the stairs, classrooms had been transformed into studios. Old glass panes had been assembled into archways that allowed light to flood into the spaces. Color freckled the wooden floors, and the high ceilings accommodated large art works. Spray paint cans lined the walls. Experimental canvases covered the desks. Inspiring words, colors, and textures hung on bulletin boards. Each studio had a wall that divided it from the next one, but there were no locking doors. Only cloth hangings or walls of pipes separated one studio from the next. There was space to create, along with accessibility and collaboration.

The work varied. The church made sure that its artists were a mixture of self-taught and trained. The result was a labyrinth of fascinating works-in-progress. One artist created Rorschach images from photographs or wigs in eerie insect-like arrangements. Another positioned gray-speckled spirals into dizzying cohesion. Acrylic paintings gave colorful depth to forms and figures, and pho-

tographs were punctuated with poignant quotes.

Gibson's work—hinged doors with the words of Martin Luther King Jr.—reminded me of the arc of justice, while her carefully constructed collages contained layers of meaning. Twelve-inch square canvases created a timeline that illustrated her winding personal journey. As she pointed to them her story opened up to me.

Each artist pays a small monthly fee for electricity and upkeep and gives back to the church during the year by teaching art classes, designing bulletins, painting door murals, organizing exhibits, or creating art for Lent. This summer the church was part of downtown Nashville's Art Crawl.

The congregation of a hundred members is in the midst of a pastoral transition, yet the members' creativity and compassion continue without interruption. As I left the building I realized that I'd been awakened to the sights, textures, sounds, and smells around me. I had the urge to pick up a brush.

Being at Downtown Presbyterian Church reminded me that being made in the image of a Creator God means that we are called to create. By allowing their history to inspire new work, its members are supporting a great awakening.

Carol Howard Merritt's blog *Tribal Church* is hosted at christiancentury.org.

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The Well of Moses, by Claus Sluter (c. 1340–1405/6)

The *Well of Moses*, by Dutch sculptor Claus Sluter, was located just outside the medieval walls of Dijon, France, when it was begun in 1393. The well was part of a Carthusian monastery, the former Chartreuse de Champmol, established by Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. It was and remains a pilgrimage site. Moses is one of six prophets (the others being David, Jeremiah, Zachariah, Daniel, and Isaiah) sculpted on the hexagonal platform of a well that held up a great crucifix. The prophets are each approximately six feet tall, made of limestone, and originally decorated with polychrome pigments. When the crucifix was in place, the total height of the well was nearly 40 feet. In his right hand, Moses holds the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, which he has just received from Yahweh (Exod. 20:1–20). In his left hand is a scroll that predicts the death of Christ, as do the scrolls of the other five prophets. Moses is a strong commanding figure, yet he is dressed in soft, draped garments and looks upward as a seer. The horns (a mistranslation in the Latin Vulgate for “rays” of light) are prominently displayed on his head. Even after the correction of the translation error, artists such as Michelangelo continued to portray Moses with the horns to help their audience recognize the figure.

Art selection and commentary by Heidi J. Hornik, who teaches in the art department at Baylor University, and Mikeal C. Parsons, who teaches in Baylor’s religion department.

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